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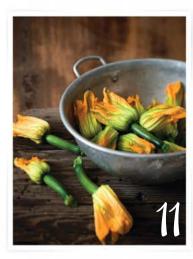












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Published continuously since 1944 ISSN 0028-8136

Editor: Jo McCarroll Editor At Large: Lynda Hallinan Deputy Editor: Christine Rush Art Director: Sarah Scully Editorial Assistant: Barbara Smith Picture Editor: Sybille Hetet Northern Region Manager: David Penny Commercial Manager: Duncan Brough Editorial Director: Kate Coughlan Distribution Manager: Magazines: Liz Badenhorst Marketing Manager: Pip Simeon Brand Manager: Jessica Lane Production Manager: Sara Hirst Design Pool Manager: Olivia Tuck

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES Ph: (09) 909 6894, fax: (09) 909 6802 Advertising Manager: Alison Shrigley Email: alison.shrigley@nzgardener.co.nz Garden Market/Directory: Marlisa DeWinter Email: marlisa.dewinter@nzgardener.co.nz or ph (09) 634 9864 Advertising Coordinator: Garima Bajaj Advertising Agency Sales: Ph (09) 970 4000

Audited circulation per issue 42,016* Audited average issue readership 344,000**

SUBSCRIPTIONS Freephone: 0800 624 744 Email: subs@nzgardener.co.nz www.nzgardener.co.nz 1 year \$78.50/2 years \$145 Australia (1 year) \$95

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES Ph: (09) 909 6800, fax: (09) 909 6802 Email: mailbox@nzgardener.co.nz Story archives/photo sales email: sybille.hetet@fairfaxmags.co.nz

AUSTRALIA ADVERTISING: Ph: 1800 0 FFXNZ (1800 033 969) or 02 9282 1366 Email: bookfairfax@fairfaxmedia.co.nz

Printing: PMP Print Christchurch

* Source: NZ Audited Bureau of Circulation; Total Net Circulation; July 12 - Sept 13 ** Source: Nielsen CMI Q4 2012 - Q3 2013

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"Minutes after you plant a single seed, hundreds of zucchini will barge out of the ground and sprawl around the garden, menacing the other vegetables."

Dave Barry,

American journalist

ebruary is a month of almost embarrassing abundance for vegetable gardeners. Tomatoes, zucchini, beans, spuds, lettuces and more are producing full pelt at my place. My trug runneth over. Literally over. I'm having to harvest with a wheelbarrow instead.

And yes, this should be cause for much rejoicing. You spend months sowing and pricking out, watching over your fledgling seedlings like a mother hen: hand watering them, gently caressing the tomatoes as you walk past and whispering sweet nothings into the ears of corn. It seems a bit churlish to complain now they are all suddenly over-performing.

But my kitchen benches are groaning with bowls of tomatoes and peppers and I have run out of space in the freezer for blanched beans. Passionfruit and eggplants are piling up (and yes, I am actually just mentioning that to brag about how well I've done with these diva crops) and zucchini are chasing me through my dreams at night. The weather outside is lovely, but I can't spare a minute to enjoy it, since I am in the kitchen, hunched over my food processor and preserving jars.

I am going to go out on a (fruit tree's) limb this month and say I don't believe the answer to dealing with glut crops lies in pickling and preserving alone, at least not just as jams and relishes. I am a great preserver and experiment a lot with chutneys, sauces and flavoured oils and vinegars. They are marvellous to have as an addition to many meals. But they are not what I'd call a meal in themselves.

My friend Heather Cole from Mapua, who writes our Nelson regional column, experimented last year with bottling soup, making the point that if you wanted your vege patch to keep you going year-round, a pantry full of jam wouldn't cut it. Look at what you actually eat, and try and make that, she said. With her advice in mind, I am concentrating on bottling tomato sauces for pasta and pizza and freezing grated zucchini to add to baking and savoury dishes (and thanks to Robyn Lloyd, who suggested on the *NZ Gardener* Facebook page that I get a spiral vegetable slicer and make zoodles aka zucchini noodles... I've just bought one and zoodles are so delicious I am almost worried I will run out of zucchini).

And of course I am eating as much as I can fresh too and on the lookout for good ways to use my glut crops (email yours to me at mailbox@nzgardener.co.nz). Can I just be clear and say by this, I mean recipes that use vegetables in bulk (a friend passed on one to help me use my garden's excess. Very kind, but her zucchini chocolate cake recipe used precisely one zucchini. I was worried in the time I took to make it, about half a dozen more zucchini would have formed outside).

One of my favourite dinners at this time of year is roasted eggplant, sweetcorn and tomato pasta, a Ginny Grant dish from one of my old *Cuisine* magazines. Slice one large eggplant into pieces about an inch-square, and toss them in a bowl with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and salt. Lay out the pieces on a baking tray lined with baking paper and bake for about 30 minutes. In another roasting dish, toss a cup of cherry tomatoes and two cobs of corn in 1 tablespoon of oil and bake for 30 minutes or until the tomatoes are just collapsing. Mash 1 clove of garlic with a little sea salt, add 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar, pour over the eggplant and stir. Using a sharp knife, remove the corn kernels from the cob and add to the eggplant along with the roasted tomatoes. Toss through 300g of hot, cooked pasta, ½ cup of basil and extra oil if needed. Serve with Parmesan.

Delicious! Although while I've been making it eight zucchini have probably appeared... looks like it's zoodles again tomorrow. Have a great February in the garden everyone!

Jo McCarroll

Mailhox



DESPERATELY SEEKING DAHLIAS

I have watched with interest the resurgence of dahlias recently. Some of my earliest memories are of my grandmother's prize-winning dahlia garden in Te Kauwhata, Waikato, in the 1970s. Among her favourites were 'Pop Harris' and 'Kelvin', which were large (actually giant!) decorative dahlias. 'Pop Harris' had a deep, deep red colour and 'Kelvin' a mauvy purple and white variegated colour similar to 'Kidd's Climax' (pictured above), which I understand is still on the market.

My mother also grew these flowers happily for years in Auckland but unfortunately lost them in a recent move.

We have searched and searched on the internet for anyone who still has these dahlias, but apart from limited references to 'Pop Harris' from the 1940s we have not been successful. If anyone could recommend or knows of anywhere these

old timers are still available we would be undyingly grateful to hear about it! Keston Ruxton and Toni Smith, LOWER HUTT and AUCKLAND

A LESSON FROM DAD

My sister and I grew up in the 1940s and 1950s as children of farmers. The farmer (our father) contracted no one in; he shore sheep, tilled soil, built fences and, morning and night, hand-milked six cows. At the end of the day, before the evening meal, he gardened: straight rows of beautiful vegetables, wonderful bean-laden fences and a rotating system which enabled seasonal delights to grace our table the whole year round.

As I recently needed a new project, I remembered that my Dad toiled happily in his retirement garden - a quarter the size of the farm homestead space. I measured out my area, began to dig. I had exhausted

myself within the hour. I quickly adjusted the size of this space with a view to extending it next year. I persevered. I expelled more perspiration than my Dad ever did and I asked my sister how he ever did all that at the end of a physically tiring day. He did; we ate; giving very little thought to any of it. But, joy of joys, I've harvested my first ever potatoes. Lois Moody, PALMERSTON NORTH

FEATHERED SLUG FIGHTERS

I do feel sorry for Lynda, who wrote about her seedling loss to slugs in the October issue. Perhaps she should get ducks? We have a few Buff Orpington ducks, and even though the slug foraging has gone on for only eight weeks, we have had to enlist my mother-in-law to keep up with the duckies' delight in slimy delicacies. (She goes out on wet nights armed with a container and headlamp and sends the slimy critters our way to our grateful, hungry ducks.) The ducks currently roam free-range in the back section and garden, and slugs and snails are now in short supply! As this breed of duck is flightless, a low fence is all that's needed to contain them. Unlike chickens, the duckies barely touch the veges, so there is no scratching out of seedlings. We have straw around our 100-plus strawberry plants, and the duckies love rummaging under it in the early morning to find any sluggy-goodness that may still be around. My husband spent time "foraging" (while weeding) with the one-week-old ducklings each day for a couple weeks, showing them how to rummage under the mats between vege rows, and look for slugs in the strawberrystraw, as they were incubator hatched. Good luck on combating the slimy vermin at your place, Lynda!

Cherie Donovan, TE AWAMUTU



A HOMEGROWN FEAST!

Never before have I eaten a meal with as much produce from the garden as the one pictured above! Starting from 9 o'clock, fritatta with homegrown zucchini; 'Blue Lake' runner beans, picked moments prior to cooking; 'Heather' potato salad, with mint and chives; bread roll with garlic butter made from elephant garlic picked a few days ago, plus more herbs; and finally at 6 o'clock, parmigiana made of eggplants and zucchini! I am by no means a veteran gardener and like us all, have had my fair share of problems. But to those who are sometimes disheartened, never give up! Anita Kundu, AUCKLAND

WISDOM OF YOUTH

Children often have a different way of looking at the world. I was working with children at our local kindergarten one afternoon. Our task was pulling out weeds. They were working hard and interesting discussions were taking place. What to pull out. How did we decide what was a weed? We had decided we liked flowers a lot better. Weeds were just work!

Then Rosie announced very forthrightly that she loved weeds. Why? "Because they listen to me." "If they listen, then you must talk to them," I said. "Yes," she said, "I say, 'I love you weeds." "And do they talk to you Rosie?" "Yes, they say I love you too Rosie." I may look at weeds in a whole new light instead of inwardly cursing their existence. I shall cultivate them as listeners for my innermost thoughts. Sandy Garman, ALGIES BAY



WETSUIT GARDENING

Today we awoke to a beautiful, windless, steady rain and after hearing a gutter overflowing (blocked by walnuts)
I decided to unblock it without getting wet... by putting on my wetsuit!

I was so enjoying being in the garden with all the earthy smells and freshness after some pretty hot, windy Hawke's Bay weeks, that I carried on to all the gutters, washed all the clearlight verandahs, then cleaned the hot house inside and out which now looks like a see-through room in the garden.

I can totally recommend wetsuit gardening – you stay warm and dry (on the inside) for hours. Kaz Jones, HAWKES BAY

BUMBLEBEES BEWARE

Barbara Smith mentioned about drunken bumblebees in the Plant Doctor Q&A in the December 2014 issue of NZ Gardener.

I have also seen this behaviour, with a lot of dead bumbles on the ground.

The culprit was linden trees. The street my mother lives in is lined with them, and when they are in flower the bees get drunk on the nectar.

Poor little bumbles! Vickory Wilson, CHRISTCHURCH



PIPE PLANTER

Look at what my clever husband has made for me! My initial request to him was for a strawberry planter similar in shape to a saw horse. During the construction phase my husband started talking about angles and gaps and I thought, "Oh no, my mental picture is completely different to his construction picture!" Finally I figured out that he had a ladder shape in mind and this is the result. It is made of old drain pipes which we painted and then slotted in between the two wooden uprights. Pretty amazing, I say! I've put in an order for two more so I can grow herbs in them - my husband just rolled his eyes! Jude Hodge, DUNEDIN

A FLORAL WHODUNNIT

I was delighted to see that my two-and-a-half-year-old grandson Nicolas had developed an appreciation of flowers. One afternoon he came indoors with a flower in his hand, smiling, and said, "I have a flower for Mummy." I thought, "How sweet!"

I didn't think any more about it until two days later my partner came in and said, "Those jolly birds have scratched out all the new petunias that I planted!"

Alexa Bartlett, WEST HARBOUR

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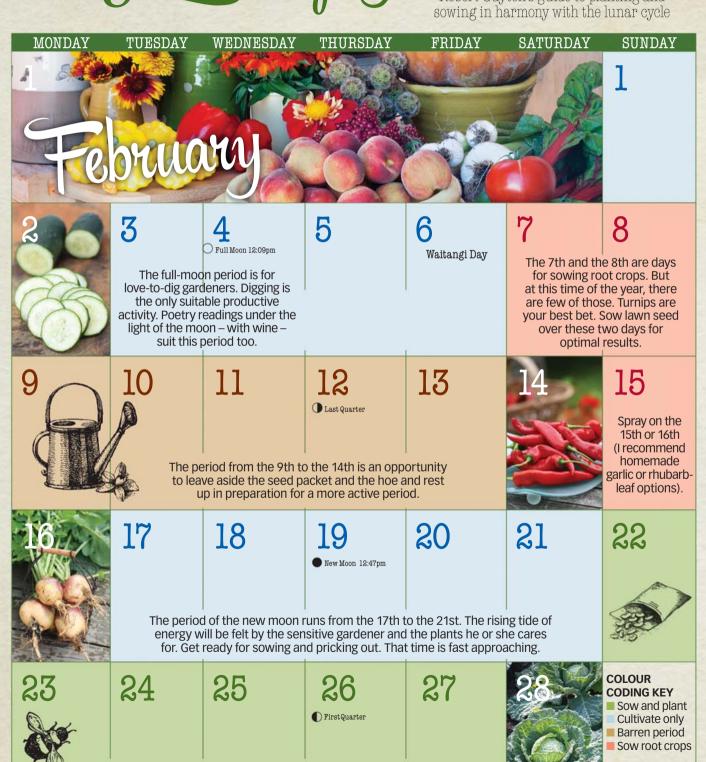
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Yates WHAT TO SOW & PLANT

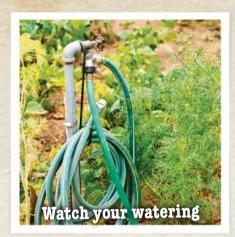
Pardening by the moon Robert Guyton's guide to planting and



The days between the 22nd and 28th are the most vital time this month. All manner of seeds can be sown and stand the best chance of success thanks to the moon's beneficial influence. Sow spinach, broccoli, onions and cabbage.

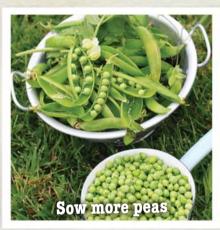
THIS MONTH...





- In February, it's all about watering. Your crops will quickly feel the heat if you don't keep on top of your irrigation duties. Heat-stressed veges, especially leafy greens, will quickly bolt to seed and their edible parts start to become bitter to taste. Target irrigation directly to the soil and keep on top of your weeds (weeds use up water that could go to your plants). Watering is a job best done when you have a bit of time... you'll get the best bang for your buck if you apply water gently and slowly with a drip irrigation system or soaker hose or similar. A quick jet blast from a hose at full bore is likely to waste water and will disturb your soil structure to boot. If your soil has dried right out, try using trenching – digging 30cm deep trenches around beds and filling them with water that can then seep in to the soil, or else apply Yates' Waterwise Hose-on Soil Wetter, which breaks the surface tension of soil to allow water to penetrate.
- Keep up with feeding plants now too. They need extra care in hot weather. Just lay off granular fertiliser if your garden is dry. If there isn't enough water, plants can't take them up safely and they burn. Apply a liquid food every two or three weeks instead.
- Mulch everything, even crops in pots.
 I said it last month, but it bears repeating.
 Mulch keeps water in the ground and, as it breaks down, adds organic matter which improves soil's ability to retain water.
 Building up soil takes time though, so if you want a shortcut, try digging a few handfuls of the kitty litter made from recycled newspapers in. It'll soak up any available water and keep it near your plants' roots!

• Look for passionvine hoppers. Not that there is much you can do if you do see 'em, the pesky little devils are next to impossible to kill. You can try knocking your vine so a cloud of them fly off and blitzing them with a pyrethrum spray or household aerosol, but really this mainly serves just to relieve your own feelings. (In my Auckland regional column on page 76 I've suggested waiting until they lay their eggs in autumn, cutting out affected branches, and disposing of them to stop the next generation instead.) Green vege bugs are active now too, and at least are fairly easy to catch. Squash them and leave them on the ground around your plants - the stinky smell keeps their pals away (and once again, it vents any ill feeling you have towards them for ruined crops).



- Sow now for winter. Brassicas, peas, snow peas, lettuces, carrots and beetroot can all go in now (although protect brassicas from cabbage whites). Sow swedes and turnips down south now. Plant out leek seedlings now too.
- Give up on your courgettes. They might be displaying the powdery, grey film over the leaves that's a sign of powdery mildew. You can cut off the affected leaves, or try a fungicidal baking soda spray, but if the plants have been producing since early summer their best days are behind them. Haul them out to plant your winter crops. Pumpkin, squash, melons and cucumbers are also prone to this problem, so keep water up, as drought stress makes plants more vulnerable. (Especially if you're in the NZ Gardener Giant Pumpkin Challenge. Watering every day so soil is moist but not wet is a must for giant gourds.) **



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Late summer's the time to control insects

In February insect numbers swell and can cause lots of damage to your flowers, roses and vegetables. **Yates® Mavrik®** is a popular choice of spray to target a broad range of insects and mites — including aphids, mites, caterpillars, thrips, whitefly and tomato potato psyllid.



JUST A MINUTE

Overwhelmed by your garden to-do list?

Nat Pember and Fabian Capomolla suggest three ways to improve soil... and each can be done in short bursts!

PIMP YOUR SOIL How to make the most of what you've got

Before starting a family you need to get the home that will accommodate them in order. Of course, that is not the way we all go about it, but if things are planned properly, getting the infrastructure right first will make looking after your family's needs easier. This is the kind of proactivity to take to the vege patch family – before planting your vegetables you first need to focus on the growing soil that will house them.

Rather than gutting your home and building a new one, it makes sense to work with what you've got. Just a few minor adjustments and additions can turn any old abode into a royal family palace.

If you don't have a patch of earth to work with, and are using pots, tubs and boxes, you should use the best quality potting mix you can afford.



















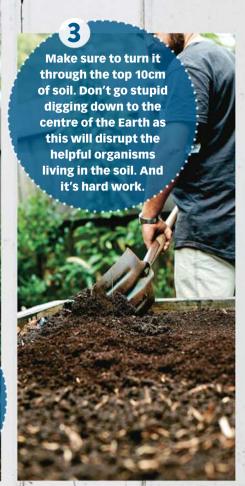


















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CUCUMBERS

Our favourite summer cucurbit has a reputation for being a bit of a diva, says Virgil Evetts, but you just have to know how to treat her right

hy do we love cucumbers so? It's a vexing question when you think on it. They're sulky, fussy plants and, when judged objectively, lack much in the way of substance beyond hoarded water, yet we remain in their crisp, cool thrall. Their fragrance alone in the sultry heat of summer is enough to calm and refresh. Their presence, however fleeting, in a carafe of iced water is transformative and as for cucumber sandwiches – salted, pressed and served lightly chilled... delicious.

Yes indeed, we're hooked on cukes. Cucumbers, in their typically watery, neutral form, have featured in Western European diets for aeons. Considering their very low nutritional value, though, it is unlikely they were consumed in volume by peasant or subsistence cultures, as this would likely have led to starvation. Perhaps this would explain why the likes of cucumber sandwiches were all the rage with the tweedy upper echelons of Victorian and Edwardian England. There's something unabashedly smug about lunching on nutritionally barren food.

As is true of aubergines, cucumbers are accused of harbouring bitterness on occasion and much advice then follows on how this can be countered. The fact is, bitterness has long been bred out of modern cucumber cultivars and it would have been rare even 100 years ago. One wonders, in fact, if at some point bitter melons (*Momordica charantia*), which are cucurbits too and resemble a sort of leprous cucumber, were marketed as cucumbers to an unsuspecting Victorian market for they certainly live up to their name.

Occasionally, apple cucumbers present very mild bitterness when allowed to mature beyond the placid white phase to a shiftier yellow. This is no fault of the fruit, but rather the grower. Sorry, but cucumbers are meant to be eaten unripe, before the seeds set and the surrounding pulp becomes loose and slimy. Once this occurs the whole fruit becomes pretty unpalatable. So seize the day and pick 'em when they're young.

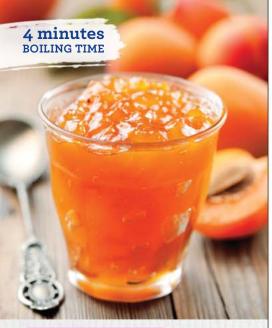
Growing guide

Cucumbers are by my measure moderately easy to grow compared to other popular members of their family. In other words, they're not quite as trouble-free as zucchini or pumpkins, but much easier-going than melons. Even if neglected, most varieties will produce a few fruit.

Cucumbers take up the least amount of garden space of all common cucurbits. To avoid misshapen fruit and insurmountable problems with pests and diseases they should always be grown vertically up a teepee or trellis. As such, most cucumbers occupy a similar amount of space to a tomato plant.

Cucumbers are strictly summer crops and should never be planted out earlier than tomatoes – that is around late October in most districts and later still if the season gets off to a slow start. Once night-time temperatures climb into the teens cucumbers set about climbing too.

They need little in the way of training – just keep them going up until there's nowhere else to go but back down again. Once fruiting kicks off in earnest, growth will slow significantly. Like most cucurbits, cucumbers produce separate male and female flowers on the same plant. Pollen is transferred



SUPER QUICK

Peach and Apricot Jam

INGREDIENTS

ikg mix of peaches and
apricots, (stones removed)

1kg Chelsea Jam Setting Sugar

10g butter

4 x 200ml jam jars and lids

METHOD

1. Blitz fruit in a food processor until pulpy.

sugar

- Place fruit and Chelsea Jam Setting Sugar into a large, heavy based saucepan (approx. 6 litre capacity). Heat on a low heat, stirring occasionally until the sugar dissolves. Add the butter and bring to a rapid boil (a boil that cannot be stirred down).
- 3. Boil for 4 minutes (skim off any foam with a spoon).
- 4. Test a small amount of jam on a cold saucer (the surface should wrinkle when a spoon is pushed through it). If the surface doesn't wrinkle, return to the boil for 1-2 minute intervals and test again.
- 5. Pour the jam into sterilised jars.
- 6. Refrigerate once opened.



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Most cucurbits produce far more male flowers than female. Very often this is all they produce for the first few weeks. This is quite normal and certainly nothing to worry about. The female flowers will appear eventually.

Pests and diseases

When it comes to pest and disease susceptibility, all commonly grown cucurbits are much of a muchness. They like hot, mostly dry conditions, good airflow and low humidity. These are plants of the prairie and desert scrubland, after all. Watering should be done infrequently but deeply and, if possible, be supported with plenty of loose, friable mulch.

Snails can do much damage to young plants, bisecting growing tips, shredding leaves and shearing open stems. Once established, the plants can usually hold their own, but until then remain vigilant with traps, pellets and night raids. Cucumber fruit allowed to form on the ground will almost certainly end up halfskinned by snails.

Powdery mildew is by far the biggest threat to cucumber plants. Spores are always in the air and nearly all plants are probably infected from the earliest stage. In other words, outbreaks are all but inevitable and eventually fatal as millions of tiny fungal fruiting bodies engulf foliage in white powder. This effectively halts photosynthesis, starving the plant. Meanwhile, the fungus is busy taking liberties with the plants' existing glucose reserves!

While total infection might be inevitable (unless you're comfortable

using heavy-duty fungicides), it need not occur until you're good and ready, ideally after you've picked your fair share of fruit.

Provided they're planted in open, sunny situations with loose, welldrained soil and watering is kept to a minimum and applied directly to the base of the plant, powdery mildew won't usually take hold until the tail end of summer. Its initial arrival as ghostly white spots, usually on the lowest and oldest leaves, is merely a call to arms, not proof that the enemy is at the gates. At this point, start spraying plants liberally and at least weekly with a spray of 250ml whole milk (blue top is best), 750ml water, half a teaspoon of baking soda (not baking powder) and a couple of drops of dishwashing liquid. Mix the spray gently to avoid foaming. The theory behind this increasingly popular approach is that milk and baking soda collectively form a barrier against further spore incursions and alkalise the leaf surface, making it outright unattractive to the acid-loving fungi.

It cannot cure existing infections but it can certainly slow their progress and, in my experience over many years now, significantly improves crops in all cucurbits and other mildew-prone plants.

Cucurbits love well-limed soil, meaning they prefer things on the alkaline rather than acid side. Because most New Zealand soils are mildly acidic, the plants are prone to yellowing, fruit drop and blossom-end rot without the help of a little lime, gypsum or even crushed plaster board.

Thrips and spider mites can cause trouble in hot weather, congregating on the undersides of leaves and, scraping and sucking at precious resources respectively. These are best tackled with your preferred organic pesticide. Mites can be somewhat slow to shift due to their habit of hiding beneath waterproof web tents. A minute amount of vegetable oil added to the spray can help with this, but should be used very carefully with soft-leaved plants like these.

PLOT TO PLATE

CUKE CUISINE

Embrace their coolness by making these classic cucumber numbers

You can't talk about cucumbers without mentioning **CUCUMBER** SANDWICHES. They don't sound like much unless you've tried them, but they really are all that. Slice your cukes thinly and sprinkle sparingly with salt. Set aside to release excess water and then pat dry. Use soft, sandwich-slice bread, remove the crusts and butter the bread evenly with actual butter.

Top pumpernickel bread with smoked salmon, sliced cucumber and dill. A squeeze of lemon and dollop of crème fraîche will take an OPEN **SCANDI SANDWICH** to the next level.

Cucumbers absorb flavour better when **BRUISED**. This opens ups their cells, making them like sponges. Use a rolling pin or similar to gently tenderise a cuke without splitting the skin. This is great for dishes where they don't need to be crisp. Partial freezing has a similar effect but must be managed carefully. A fully frozen cucumber thaws to rubbery nonsense.

CUCUMBER JUICE OR PUREE forms the base of many a fine palate-cleansing savoury sorbet or granita. Combine with the likes of mint, coriander, ginger and basil (use the latter with care - it's a total show pony). Season and spice with a little Tabasco or, better still, local Kaitaia Fire, and a slug of Tequila never hurt either. For granita, simply partially freeze, then pulverise and serve. For sorbet, use an ice-cream machine, unless you have strong wrists.

RAITA is a beautiful thing. Yoghurt, cucumbers, a little salt and some fresh herbs in the vein of mint, coriander and maybe fennel. The cukes should be cubed neatly and folded into the mix rather than blended. They should remain crisp and perfectly intact. Use the best unsweetened yoghurt you can find.

Similar to, but subtly different from Indian cousin raita, Mediterranean TZATZIKI is delicious on grilled meats or as a dip. To 500g of strained Greek yoghurt, add 1 cucumber, seeded and grated with the skin on, a clove of garlic crushed with a 1/2 teaspoon of sea salt, 1/4 cup roughly chopped mint leaves, the juice of a lemon and salt and pepper. Mix together, season and chill.

And while we're still touring the Mediterranean, who can go past that summer staple, the GREEK SALAD? Combine thinly sliced red onion, chunks of cucumber and tomato (the sweeter the better), and Kalamata olives and crumble feta on top. Season with salt and fresh oregano and dress with olive oil and a squeeze of lemon if you wish.

CHILLED CUCUMBER SOUP is a starter for a summer dinner party. To a blender, add 3 cucumbers, peeled, seeded and diced into chunks, 1 cup plain yoghurt, clove of garlic, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 4 chopped spring onions, 1/4 cup water, 1/2 cup chopped, fresh mint and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Puree until smooth and add salt to taste. Serve in bowls garnished with fresh dill leaves.

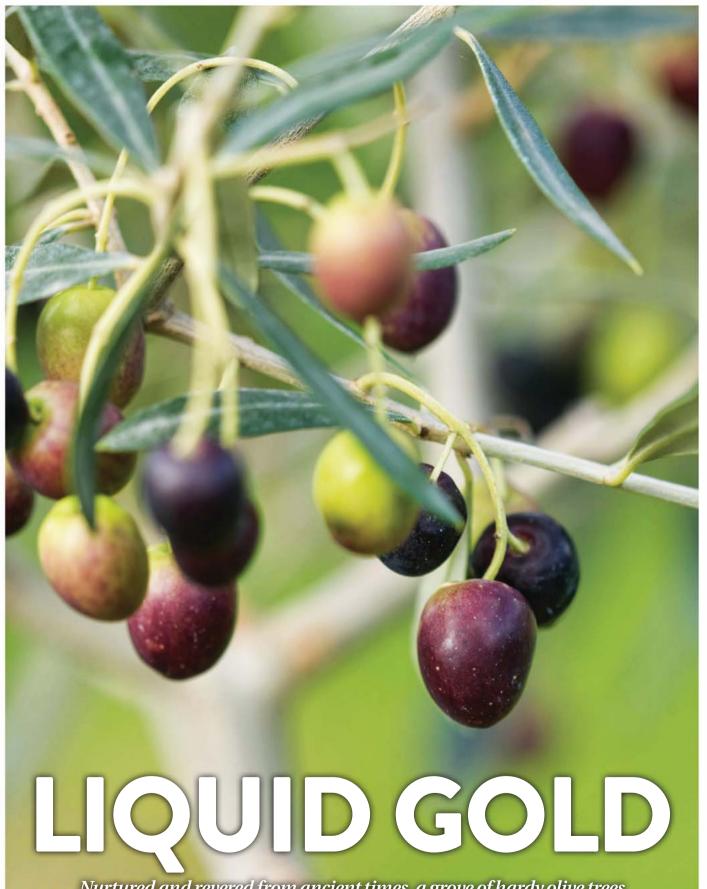
Slice 2 or 3 Japanese cucumbers (or use English cucumbers instead) into thin discs. Sprinkle with 2 teaspoons salt, leave for five minutes, then rinse. Add to a bowl with ¼ cup rice vinegar, 2 tablespoons sugar, pinch salt and 2 tablespoons sesame seeds. Cover and wait at least one day before eating. Serve JAPANESE PICKLED CUCUMBERS with sushi and rice dishes.

If you can't eat 'em all, wear 'em. **DEFLATE PUFFY EYES** by placing refrigerated coins of cucumber on them. Or treat your skin with a cucumber and yoghurt mask.



the mixologist's friend. Mix

cuke juice with white spirits and fruit juices, such as apple, white grape and lime, for a TASTY TIPPLE. *



Nurtured and revered from ancient times, a grove of hardy olive trees will provide you with rich returns for years to come, says Kate Marshall

Hand-harvesting is perfectly sufficient. If you have a few trees to pick, channel your inner Italian housewife by inviting friends for a session followed by a long lunch.

live trees have been cultivated for more than 5000 years in the Mediterranean and Africa, but are comparatively new to New Zealand. Our oldest trees probably date back to the 1830s when Charles Darwin wrote about observing olives planted at Waimate North. There must have been an olive enthusiast settler in Northland as there are other early plantings in the Hokianga, Kerikeri, Snells Beach, Whangarei and even in the grounds of the Waitangi Treaty House.

More recently, there was a burst of olive grove plantings in the early 1990s, when nurseries grew hundreds of thousands of trees each year to satisfy dreams of liquid gold and the romance of an idyllic, Mediterranean-styled life. It turns out that New Zealand's growing conditions produce a very high quality extra virgin olive oil from some varieties. If it weren't for market protectionism of Italian and Spanish oil producers in the EU, our oils would be extremely successful in these markets.

The past 20-odd years of commercial plantings of olive trees have refined the range of available varieties to those that perform best in our unique climate, which is mainly those that originate in France, Sicily and Italy. Some of the early trial varieties have proven to be abysmal in our environmental conditions, so are no longer in production.

With their narrow, grey-green evergreen foliage and gnarled trunks, olive trees can be incorporated into backyards of any style. They are most often planted, however, with rosemary, lavender, citrus and box hedging for a traditional Mediterranean-themed garden. Olives are versatile trees, forming a thick hedge or screen. They can be clipped as a topiary standard, thrive in a large pot, and can even be trained as an espalier. Check out great examples of espaliered olives and citrus in the display gardens at Pacifica Garden Centre & Cafe in Papamoa.

Harvest time

The crop of the olive tree is technically considered a fruit – a drupe, with flesh surrounding a stone or seed – but olives are typically used in savoury dishes. Freshly picked olives are very bitter, so are always cured to reduce their natural bitterness.

Some varieties are pickled when green (such as the Sicilian 'Nocellara'), while others are harvested when the skin has turned black ('Verdale' and 'Kalamata').

Worryingly, instead of using fully ripe fruit, some commercially produced pickled olives are chemically stained to look black. Olives to be pressed for oil should be harvested when about a third have turned black, a third are green and a third are between green and black. This will produce a mildly peppery oil. For a strongly peppery flavour, use more green fruit than black.

In large commercial groves, mechanical tree shakers with nets are used to harvest the crop. In small and home-based groves, hand-harvesting is perfectly sufficient, using specially designed rakes (available from Country Trading, countrytrading.co.nz) with tarpaulins underneath the trees to gather the falling fruit. If you have a few trees to pick, channel your inner Italian housewife by inviting friends for a session of harvesting followed by a long lunch.

Realistically, most olives grown in a home garden are either going to be pickled or eaten by birds, as pressing the fruit for oil is difficult. Finding a local olive press that will accept small quantities can be challenging, and investing in your own press is usually prohibitively expensive. Even if you succeed in overcoming these challenges, it can be a bit demoralising to receive a half-litre bottle of oil as a result of five kilograms of lovingly handpicked fruit. Still, it would be the most treasured liquid gold oil in the kitchen, only to be used for special salad dressings and dipping.

Although olive trees can be grown in a range of climates - from Africa to Italy, and Northland to Central Otago – the trees produce best with a long, hot, dry summer to ripen the fruit, and cool winters. Some varieties, however, like the Tuscan 'Frantoio' and 'Leccino' are top performers in all regions of New Zealand, tolerating the humidity of the North as well as the harshly cold winters of the South. The other star cultivars are 'J5' (particularly for Auckland and Northland), 'Koroneiki' (best choice for coastal spots) and 'Pendolino' (lovely arching branches and is a great pollinator for 'Frantoio' and 'Leccino'). For hedges, screening and for shaping into a standard, the bushy 'Chemlali' variety is recommended. Although most varieties can be used for pickling, 'Kalamata' is the most well-known, but is difficult to buy here as the trees are very tricky to propagate. Other options are 'Frantoio' or 'Nocellara' (both pickled when green) and 'Verdale' or the French 'Picholine' (pickled when black). 'Koroneiki' is not recommended for pickling because the stone is large for the size of the fruit.



Planting Like most fruit trees, olives like light, freedrained soils most. Vigour and productivity will be stunted in a less than ideal site, such as poor, heavy or water-logged soils. A pH of 6.5 to 7 is preferred, which most soils in New Zealand provide, and full sun will ensure maximum productivity.

Olive trees will grow best if lightly fertilised through the summer, along with light irrigation in dry conditions. Plenty of water is more important for olives that will be pickled, to increase the fruit size, compared with varieties to be pressed for oil. Too much nitrogen will result in excessive leafy growth, at the expense of fruit production. Use a well-balanced fruit tree fertiliser with plenty of potassium for flowering and fruiting growth.

Flowering in early summer from November into December, the small flowers are pollinated by bees and wind spreading the pollen. Wet conditions during the flowering period will have a drastically negative effect on the resulting crop.

There are few pests or diseases of any significance that affect olive trees in home gardens. The most common problem is peacock spot (Spilocaea oleagina), a fungal disease causing circular lesions on the foliage – and the fruit, if the disease is prevalent. If the spots pop up on your trees, spray with copper oxychloride in winter (after harvesting the fruit) to kill overwintering disease spores. Pruning trees to have an open centre will also help to increase airflow, thereby reducing the disease building up in dense branches and foliage.

Birds are the main pest problem

with olive trees. eating the fruit as it starts to ripen. Commercial olive growers use booming bird scarers, which are as likely as a yapping dog or boy racer's exhaust to attract a visit from noise control if used in an urban or semi-rural location. The next best option is to hang CDs in the trees - the reflecting lights

seem to scare off birds – or just be resigned to the fact that a portion of the crop will be lost to these scavengers. I'm not sure if in 10 years' time hanging an iPod in the tree is going to do the same trick, so it might be a good idea to keep a stash of scratched old discs in your garden shed for future use.

With these daft ideas, no wonder my husband calls me a hoarder!



This is Country Trading's Heather Cole's recipe. She adapted it from Get Growing. If you prefer crisp, peppery green olives then bottle them in brine as soon as you've picked and washed them. Otherwise soak the olives in a large glass jar or bucket of water, changing the water every day for up to 40 days. Leave it in a convenient spot so that you remember to do it daily. The olives will turn brownish and lose a lot of their bitterness.

Line up your glass jars and make a brine of 1 litre of water and 100g of salt, scaling the mixture up or down so you'll have enough brine for the quantity of olives you're curing.

You can heat the brine in a stainless steel pot and add any of the following seasonings on their own or in combination: Garlic cloves

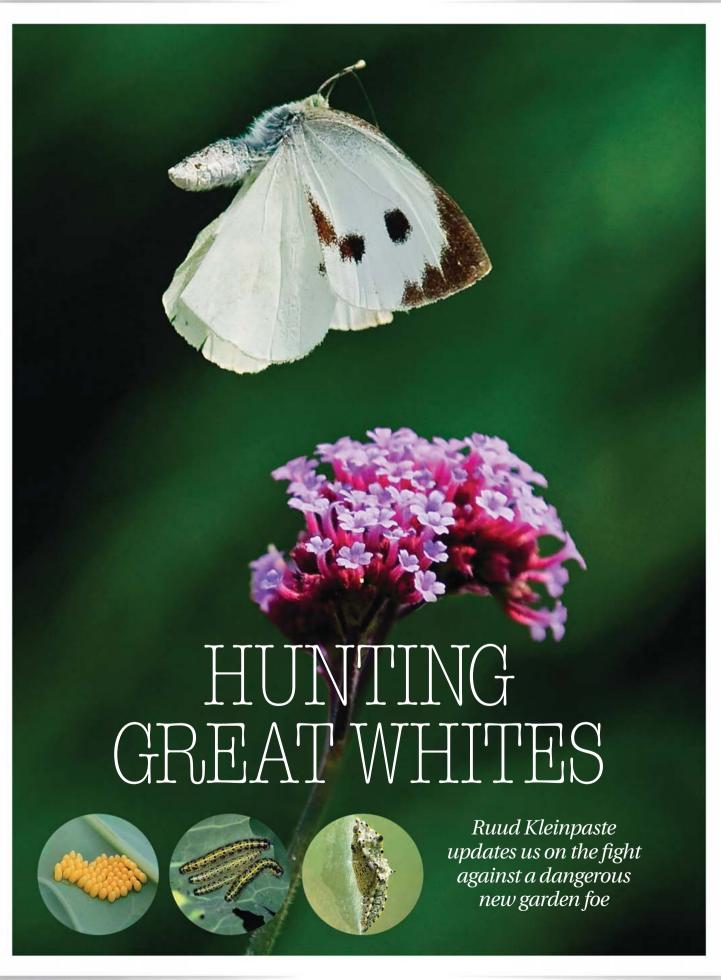
- Wild fennel stalks Bay leaves
- Celery sticks Whole chillies











As a student, I would catch moths at night with a bright light and butterflies during the day with a butterfly net.

n those days, my hobbies seemed far more important than the lectures at the university in the Netherlands where I was studying! With almost 400 species of butterfly (and thousands of moths) found in Holland, a young entomologist could have a field day.

In that country, we were blessed with three common species of white butterfly (the genus Pieris), all easily caught and curated into a collection. Despite their variability, especially between first, second and third brood of the season, they were also readily identified and separated into species.

All three pierids laid their eggs on cruciferous plants, notably brassicas. Imagine trying to grow cabbages in your Dutch allotment... it was an absolute nightmare keeping the beggars off 'em!

The great white butterfly (*Pieris brassicae*) was the biggest marauder of the lot. It made the smaller species seem meek by comparison. It is all to do with the numbers game. A pregnant female great white can lay clutches of 50 to 100 eggs at a time and the impact that has on your prized cabbage is enormous.

These large groups of bright yellow eggs really stand out on the leaf – you won't need to consult your optometrist to see this one! The larvae or caterpillars that hatch also seem to stick together in one large cohort, eating the foliage in distinct disaster zones. The larger they grow, the more they eat.

In New Zealand, we have had to deal with the small white cabbage butterfly for many years. It was first spotted in Hawke's Bay in 1929, and soon spread through all nooks and crannies of our country. This butterfly causes quite a few problems in our vegetable garden, but it really is nothing compared to the great white... which turned up in Nelson about five years ago.

How this pest arrived here is not clear. One thing is for sure, the Department of Conservation and the Ministry for Primary Industries have been on its tail ever since, catching the adult butterflies and scouting out the caterpillars on the host plants. The assistance of the general public – especially gardeners – has been (and still is) one of the most valuable contributions in the attempts to prevent this insect getting a toehold in Aotearoa.

This summer's update on the Pieris pest gives some encouragement that the numbers are decreasing; despite extra "hunting manpower" (as in more people spending more time looking than last year) the number of butterflies, eggs and larvae found has fallen significantly.

Another great result is the fact that the species does not seem to have left its original area of distribution, and has not (yet) been spotted outside of the Nelson region.

Which is a good reminder that we can all help by not swapping garden produce with family and friends around New Zealand. Eggs or chrysalids hidden on cabbage leaves could set the eradication attempt back, costing more (zillions) dollars from the DoC and MPI budgets!

If you are keen to play a part in the fight against this pest, then a DoC ranger has achieved very good results using a lure to attract great whites. Will Wragg started with a solar garden butterfly from a garden centre, but modified it to resemble a great white butterfly. It has been effective in attracting *Pieris brassicae*, which are then caught in nets and destroyed. Try something like this in your garden, especially if you know the butterflies have been seen nearby.

But wherever you are in New Zealand, especially around the Nelson district, let's all keep our eyes peeled for this dreadful butterfly.

AT A GLANCE

• **Diagnostics** The great white butterfly is almost twice as big as an ordinary cabbage white.

Eggs are laid in yellow clusters on the leaves of host plants including brassicaceae, native cress species and related tropaeolum species (such as nasturtium).

After hatching, caterpillars stick together and feed in packs – they make a visible chewing mess on the leaves. As they grow, they do more and more damage, although clusters may contain fewer individuals.

Great white caterpillars differ in colour from the velvet-green cabbage white caterpillar: at the young stages they're yellow with a black head; as they grow they become more yellowgreen with splotches of black.

The chrysalis is light green during the warmer months, or light grey in wintering stage, with black and yellow spots.

Parasites & predators

Great white have a similar range of parasitoids to the small white. *Cotesia glomerata* is a parasitic wasp that lays eggs inside the developing caterpillar and the grubs eventually consume it from the inside.

Once the larvae emerge they spin white cocoons from which the next lot of wasps hatch. The semi-dead butterfly caterpillar even "stands guard" over its killer parasites and protects them from predatory insects.

Great white chrysalids have a specific wasp parasitoid (*Pteromalus puparum*) that kills the pupa and emerges through a hole in the chrysalid's skin.

In Europe there's a tiny wasp that hitches on to a pregnant great white and, when she lays her eggs, the tiny wasp lays her eggs inside the butterfly's eggs.





1 Cut 2 x 1200mm lengths then cut an indent at each end, 90mm long x 20mm deep, 175mm down from the top edge and 140mm up from the bottom edge.

2 Cut 2 x 865mm lengths, or to a length that fits the width desired for your gate (it may differ from ours). Slot them into the indented posts to form your gate frame.

3 Stand the gate frame up on its side. Clamp it to hold the posts in place, then screw together to secure. Use two screws at each end, eight screws altogether.

Place all tools on the gate frame to see how they fit best. Remove, then place the tool you want at the bottom. Mark with a pencil where to cut, and cut handle to fit.

5 Continue placing the tools in layers and marking where to cut. In some cases you may need to remove the handle, cut the shaft, then re-fix the handle, to avoid having to cut the handle.

6 If necessary, cut indents in each shaft so they fit together snugly. Drill a hole right through all shafts at the centre and insert bolt. Screw on washers and nuts to secure.

Use staples to secure the tools where you can, such as the tines of a rake or a tiller. If possible screw through any D-handles to secure them to the gate frame.

Prime the metal parts of the tools with Resene GP Metal Primer, then paint all parts with Resene Lumbersider. When dry, attach hinges and glue tool accents to gate.



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Ask an expert

FRUIT & VEGE GROWING ADVICE THIS MONTH

TOXIC HONEY
If bees get pollen and nectar
from a poisonous plant, does
that make the honey poisonous too?
CARL SKINNER, AUCKLAND

Yes, some plants contain substances that are toxic to humans but have no effect on bees. If bees collect nectar, pollen or honeydew from these plants the resulting honey can be toxic.

In New Zealand the source of toxic honey is tutu (*Coriaria arborea*), which is poisonous to stock and humans. Notorious cases of poisoning from eating tutu include the first two sheep brought to New Zealand by Captain James Cook and an elephant from a travelling circus.

Tutu grows as an evergreen shrub common in Gisborne, Coromandel and Hawke's Bay. Passionvine hoppers feed on tutu and excrete honeydew

containing toxic tutin. Bees feed on the honeydew, take

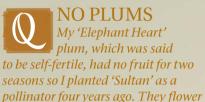
feed on the honeydew, take it back to the hive and the resulting honey contains tutin. Bees are unaffected but people eating the honey can experience vomiting, convulsions, delirium and even death. The last case of poisoning from honey containing tutin was as recent as 2008.

There are strict regulations for testing honey supplied for sale. Carol Downer, from the Auckland Beekeepers Club, says that home beekeepers should remove combs from

hives by the end of

December to avoid the risk period during late summer. Hawke's Bay columnist and bee keeper, Janet Luke, shows how to identify tutu on youtube (search for tutin toxic honey). More details available at

greenurbanliving.co.nz and www.foodsafety.govt.nz. Barbara Smith



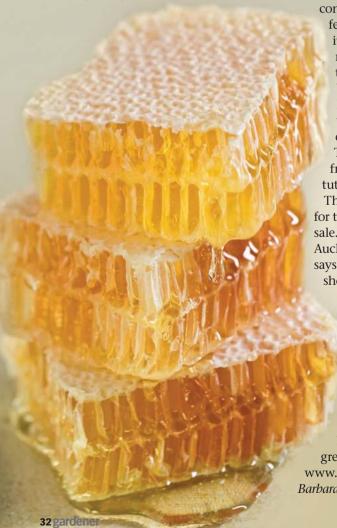
at the same time but still no fruit! HELGA ARLINGTON, AUCKLAND

I must admit that I'm a bit stumped as to why two plum trees that flower at the same time haven't fruited for four years. There must be sufficient winter chilling as the flowers are being produced. But 'Sultan' and 'Elephant Heart' are both Japanese-type plum varieties that flower earlier in spring than European-types, so are more susceptible to pollination problems in unsettled spring weather.

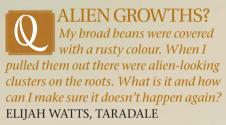
If it's too cold, wet or windy, bees won't be flying so pollination is affected. Varieties that are self-fertile are also affected, as they still require bees to transfer pollen between flowers.

Bearing in mind that the 'Sultan' is only four years old, so probably has only produced a viable amount of flowers for maybe two seasons to provide pollination for the 'Elephant Heart', it's possible that the weather hasn't been conducive to good pollination for these past two seasons.

Continue to apply potash (potassium) especially in late summer and autumn. Make sure the trees are well watered, especially after flowering. Stress during this time will cause the baby fruit to drop. *Kate Marshall, Waimea Nurseries*







Rust appears as small bumps on leaves and can be orange, yellow, brown or black. Unfortunately, there is very little that can be done to control rust once it takes hold of your broad bean crop. The best form of control is to remove and dispose of infected leaves as soon as you see signs of spores. Dispose of the infected plant material in the rubbish or burn; do not compost as this will help the disease spread. Other methods of control are to plant broad beans earlier in autumn so that you harvest earlier in spring rather than midsummer. Make sure there is good air circulation around plants. Dusting with sulphur may help reduce the chance of rust.

The nodules on the roots are typical of plants in the legume family, of which broad beans are a member. When nitrogen levels in the soil are low, beneficial nitrogen-fixing bacteria that live in the soil form a symbiotic (good) relationship with the plant. The beneficial bacteria enters the plant through the root cell wall, the cells rapidly divide; that is how the nodules are formed. Nitrogen is taken from the air (rather than the soil) to form ammonium, which is used by plants to create amino acids. It is nothing to be concerned about.

Lianne Wilson, Tui



PEAR SLUGS
My pear tree has lots of brown
marks all over the leaves, and
there are tiny slug-like creatures all over
the tree. Can you please tell me what
they are, and how I can get rid of them.
SARITA BETSCHART, TE AWAMUTU

These are called pear slugs (or cherry and pear slugs) because they are slimy, but they are really the larval stage of the pear sawfly *Caliroa cerasi*. A female fly lays eggs on new leaves in November. The larvae hatch in a couple of weeks and begin to graze on the leaf surfaces. Then the sawfly larvae pupate in the soil beneath the trees. Another generation of slugs in autumn can cause even more severe damage by defoliating the tree, which leads to a poor crop the next year.

Early treatment as soon as slugs are spotted is the most effective. A severe infestation can leave just a skeleton of leaf veins behind. Methods of control include: picking the pear slugs off by hand on a small tree; blasting them with a jet from the hose; cultivating soil under the tree in early spring to disturb the pupae; dusting diatomaceous earth over slug infestations; or a soapy spray.

Sprays include Nature's Way Pyrethrum, Yates Confidor or Naturalyte Insect Control or Kiwicare's Organic Insect Control.

Super Spectrum, also from Kiwicare, has an systemic insecticide that makes the leaves toxic to caterpillars and a fungicide to protect the damaged leaves.

Barbara Smith

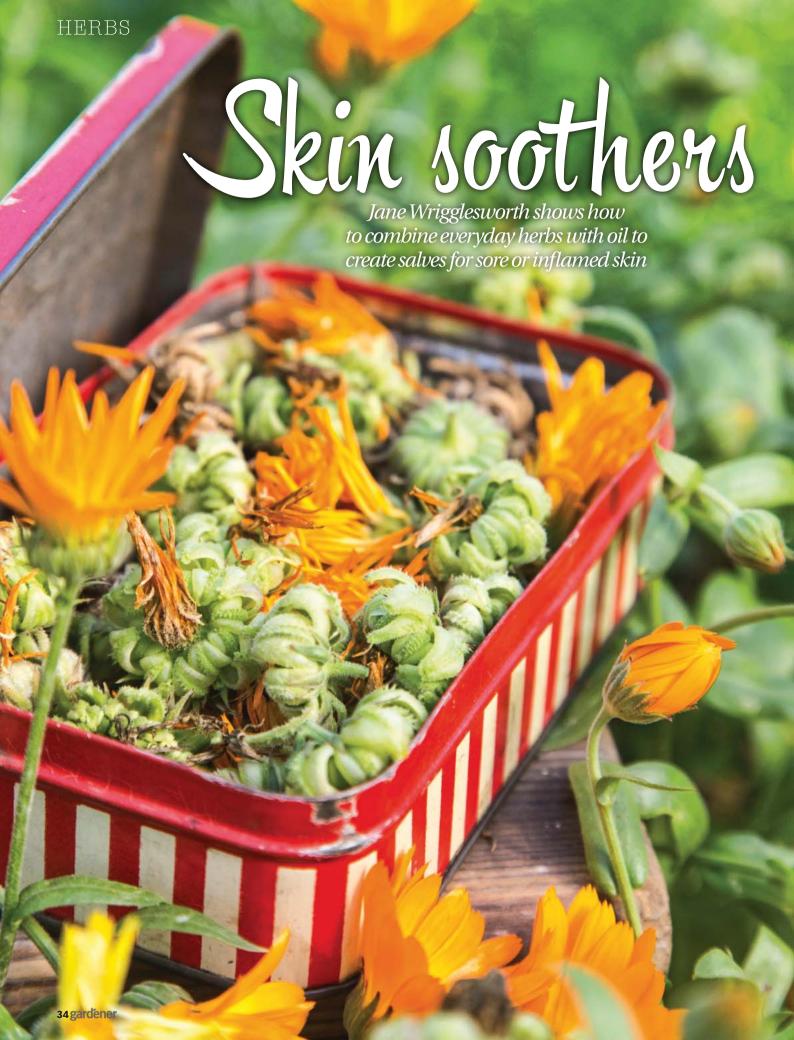
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Making your own herbal salves is a great way to create natural first-aid treatments for the whole family

alves are simply thickened ointments that are used to soothe and heal skin. Depending on what herbs they contain, they can be used to treat everything from burns and insect bites, to rashes, inflammation and chapped lips or hands. Or you could use them non-medicinally, as fragrant massage creams or moisturising lip balms.

Salves are easy to make and can be great gifts. All you need is an oil that has been infused with your herb of choice, beeswax and essential oil. The beeswax thickens the salve so that it's easier to apply to the skin. You can play around with the consistency of your salve by adding more or less beeswax.

Cold-infused oils

To make a salve, you first need to make an infused oil. The oil-soluble components of herbs can be extracted by simply infusing the herbs in an everyday oil, such as olive, sunflower or almond, for a period of time. The oil is then made thicker with the addition of beeswax (and a few drops of essential oil may be added to ramp up the scent if you want). Extracting the medicinal components from herbs is usually done by this method which is known as cold infusion. However, the process does take several weeks. If you want a quicker option, you can buy infused oils from herbalists or online.

Hot-infused oils

Hot infusion is the method used when infusing an oil with woody herbs or tougher plant parts. It is a much quicker method and can be completed in just a few hours. You need to ensure that you heat the oil very gently, however, otherwise the active constituents may be destroyed. For this reason I prefer to use the coldinfusion method, although I do use the hot oil infusion method with chilli peppers and ginger (the oil can be used to treat sore muscles and stiff joints), or when I want an infused oil quickly.

For a hot-infused oil

For dried herbs use a ratio of one part herb to three parts oil. For fresh herbs, use one part herb to 1.5 parts oil. Coarsely chop the herb and add, together with the oil, to a double boiler (or heat-proof glass bowl placed over a saucepan with water) and simmer over low heat for between one and three hours. Make sure it is a very low simmer with only a few bubbles; do not let the oil boil. When the oil looks and smells herby (roots and thicker parts will take the longest), it's ready. The lower the heat and longer the infusion, the better.

Cool, then strain into another bowl through a fine muslin cloth, squeezing out as much liquid as possible. Pour into a bottle and seal.

Calendula oil

One of my favourite infused oils that can be used for a variety of ailments is calendula oil, and it's a great herb to start with in salve-making. Calendula is an excellent herb for skin irritations, including rashes, scratches, cuts, inflammation and minor burns. It's also good for chapped lips and hands and is gentle enough for babies (it can be used to soothe nappy rash) and elderly skin. It stimulates the production of collagen at the wound site, helping to minimise scars.

Fill a 1-litre glass jar with a tight-fitting lid three-quarters full with fresh calendula petals (half-full if you are using dried petals). Before placing in the jar, make sure you allow freshly picked petals to dry out for 12 hours to remove most of the moisture; too much moisture, and your oil will go rancid. Fill the jar with cold-pressed virgin olive oil, stopping about 3cm from the top. Stir, screw the lid on tightly, then place the jar on a bright windowsill (out of direct sunlight) for four to six weeks. Shake once a day.

After about six weeks, strain through a fine muslin cloth. Pour the infused oil into a glass bottle, label with the name and date, and store in a cool, dark cupboard.

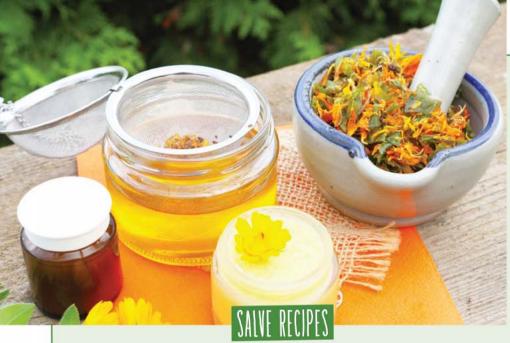
DID YOU KNOW...

In 50AD Dioscorides, a surgeon in the Roman army, published *De Materia Medica*. This detailed the use of plants in treating a range of ailments and was widely read and used by physicians over the next 1500 years.

This oil can be rubbed on to the skin as it is to soothe rashes and eczema, or be used to make a salve, which is less messy to use. If you don't have calendula, these same instructions can be used to cold-infuse most other herbs.

Other herbal oils

The list is long when it comes to the herbs useful for making salves. Instead of calendula, try chickweed (for minor burns, rashes, eczema, psoriasis, insect bites and other skin irritations), lavender (soothing and anti-inflammatory), comfrey (for wounds, bruises and minor burns), thyme (antiseptic for cuts and scratches), yarrow (for bruising, cuts, bleeding, rashes), plantain (great for bee stings, insect bites, inflammation and minor burns), chamomile (soothing, anti-inflammatory) or lemon balm (for cold sores).



Calendula salve

You can use a different essential oil here, if you wish, but I like lavender. It is a natural antibiotic and antiseptic. **Ingredients** • 15g beeswax, roughly chopped or grated • 100ml calendulainfused oil • 10-20 drops of lavender essential oil (or another depending on your preferred scent)

Place beeswax and calendula oil in a double boiler and heat on low until the beeswax is melted. At this stage you can check the consistency by pouring a tablespoon of the mixture onto a saucer and placing in the freezer for a couple of minutes until it cools. Remove from the freezer, and test the consistency. For a thicker salve, add more beeswax. For a

softer consistency, add more oil. Once you have it at your desired consistency, remove from heat and add essential oil. Pour into small, dry, clean jars and allow to cool before placing the caps on the jars. Store in a cool, dark cupboard.

Gardener's salve

This is a great all-round salve to soothe gardeners' hands or for treating rashes and other skin irritations, minor burns, scratches and insect bites.

Ingredients • 15g beeswax, roughly chopped or grated • 30ml calendulainfused oil • 30ml chickweed-infused oil • 30ml plantain-infused oil

- 1 tablespoon rosehip seed oil
- 10-20 drops of lavender essential oil

Make as for the calendula salve. adding the rosehip seed oil with the lavender essential oil after the beeswax has melted and the double boiler has been removed from heat.



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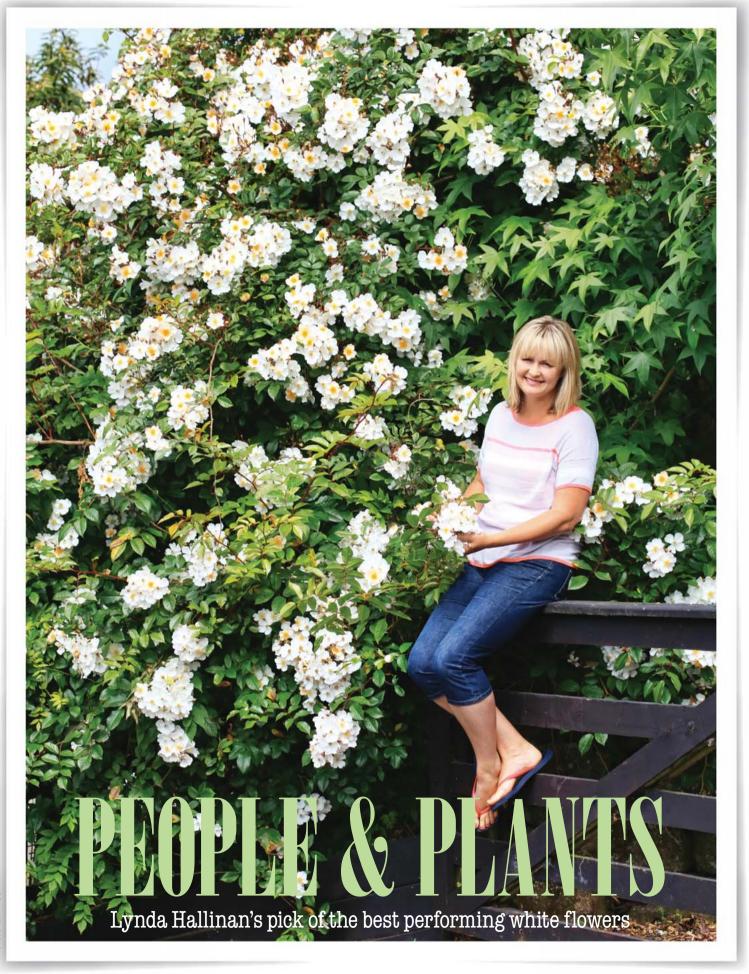


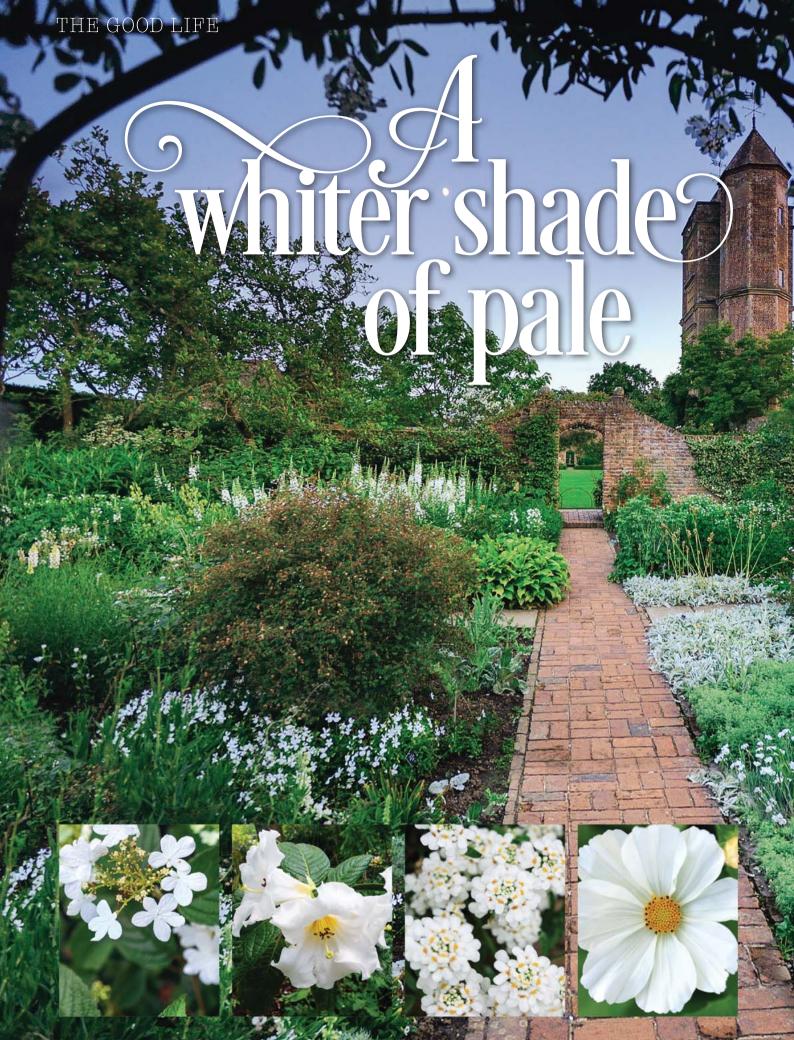




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Inspired by Vita Sackville-West's sophisticated white garden at Sissinghurst Castle in Kent, Lynda Hallinan has a crack at creating her own cool-coloured corner for summer respite

PHOTOS: SALLY TAGG

hat sort of gardener are you? Brave and bold, or subtle and sophisticated? High class or low class? Experimental? Eccentric? Egalitarian (even when it comes to weeds)? I'd like to think I have fairly good taste, with an eye for pleasing plant combinations – deft touches that cleverly echo or contrast texture, colour and form – but who am I kidding? Though that might be true of my garden in the throes of spring, by late summer I'm obsessed with colour: Hawaiian shirt-style, in-your-face flamboyance.

In my defence, I'm opening my garden for the Heroic Garden Festival on February 14-15 (and see page 44 for details of a special *NZ Gardener* preview on February 13), so a little showing off is in order.

Below, from far left: Despite its name, Viburnum plicatum 'Summer Snowflake' is at its most beautiful in late spring, when it produces tiers of lacecap blooms; Rhododendron 'Mi Amor' has large trumpet-like flowers with a wickedly seductive citrus scent; the more candytufts (Iberis) I grow, the more I grow to like these pincushioned charmers; cosmos is a must-have; the dainty double granny's bonnet, Aquilegia 'Lime Sorbet', is a hardy perennial that's easy to raise from seed (Kings Seeds); if you find the powerful perfume of famous 'Casablanca' lilies a tad overpowering, plant their Asiatic cousins instead. I prefer them for picking; I planted the towering perennial tobacco, Nicotiana sylvestris, along the front edge of my white garden so that I could look up into its constellations of starry white flowers. I'm now regrettting that decision as last year it shed thousands of seeds, every one of which has subsequently germinated in the gravel paths below; if you find our native red kaka beak a bit flashy, seek out its subtle sibling, Clianthus puniceus 'White Heron'.











"It is amusing to make one-colour gardens," wrote Vita Sackville-West in 1950.

At this time of the year, my garden is a hot mess of orange collerette dahlias, yellow bidens daisies, golden rudbeckias, scarlet bicolor zinnias and tangerine marigolds – except for one wee corner where I'm attempting to pay homage to the famous white garden at Sissinghurst Castle in Kent.

The concept of a monochromatic garden is nothing new these days, but it was considered revolutionary when Vita Sackville-West designed hers at Sissinghurst. In 1950, she revealed her plans for a "grey, green and white" garden in her weekly *Observer* newspaper column.

"It is amusing to make one-colour gardens," she wrote. "If you think that one colour would be monotonous, you can have a two- or even a three-colour, provided the colours are happily married, which is sometimes easier of achievement in the vegetable than in the human world."

At Sissinghurst, the white garden is framed by clipped yew hedges and has an elegant wrought iron gazebo smothered in a cumulus cloud of white rambling roses (*Rosa mulliganii*), whereas my white garden teeters at the top of the hill above my plum orchard and has no such glamour.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Oriental poppies (Papaver orientalis) are the body builders of the poppy family, with hairy, stocky stalks and thick crêpe paper petals. These clump-forming perennials come in a range of hot colours as well as white, and boast a characteristic central black splotch. If you can't source a white variety, scatter a seed blend. Hopefully at least one will prove to be pale, then divide to propagate; no white garden (nor any other garden for that matter) should be without the frothy, spring-flowering hardy annual Orlaya grandiflora. It's delightful and self-sowing; more commonly seen in red, Schizostylis coccinea 'Alba', the white kaffir lily, also has attractive grass-like foliage; springflowering 'White Magic' muscari bulbs are a stylish change from traditional blue grape hyacinths. Plant them in pots.

Never mind – it's really just a place to experiment with the absence of colour. Though an all-white colour scheme can end up looking rather bland, it's elevated to something quite magical by incorporating splashes of silver or grey foliage.

Lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*) is an obvious – and easy care – choice, but the talking point in my white garden this summer has been *Salvia* argentata, better known as silver sage.

Salvia argentata has remarkably soft, downy white foliage, like a lop-eared rabbit. It's impossible to resist giving it a stroke every time I walk past. The large woolly leaves sparkle in the dew but these biennials won't tolerate wet soil and are liable to rot in winter. If they do make it through unscathed, they'll flower in spring – then die. They're not a fan of hot, humid summers either. You can't win!

Vita Sackville-West visualised "the white trumpets of dozens of regale lilies coming up through the grey of southernwood and artemisia", whereas I have huge 'Snow Queen' longiflorum lilies and 'Limelight' hydrangeas emerging through the silvery clumps of *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle' in my white garden.

This page, from top: The rapacious rambling rose 'Wedding Day' has clawed its way to the top of one of the 8m-tall liquidambar trees on our driveway. It only flowers once, for a fortnight at the end of November, but makes a marvellous show. However, shortly after this photo was taken it fell out of the tree in stormy weather, prompting its first major prune in five years; the single flowers of 'Wedding Day' are a magnet for bees each morning; Chincherinchee (Ornithogalum thyrsoides) are popular cut flowers and it's not hard to see why, as each flower spike lasts well over two weeks in a vase, and up to a month in the garden. Sadly, these South African lilies are somewhat temperamental in wet soil. Most of mine rotted over winter, which hurts as they cost \$5 per potted bulb!



















My gardening colleague Fiona Henderson is forever turning up with small, unassuming plants that transform into superstars, such as the lovely white form of biennial *Geranium maderense* (from Joy Plants in Pukekohe), felty foliaged white rose campion (*Lychnis coronaria alba*) or *Schizostylis coccinea* 'Alba', whose name I can never recall. "It sounds like a swear word," jokes Fiona.

At Sissinghurst, the white garden is one of the most photographed features, whereas my white garden is impossible to take a decent photo of: it's really no more than a cooling clutch of pale pretties in one place.

Perhaps that's why I gravitate towards it so much in high summer. It's refreshing, as well as being a happy shambles of casual cosmos, shasta daisies, honesty seedpods, solomon's seal, petunias, candytuft, anemones, lychnis and filigreed parasols of false Queen Anne's lace (*Ammi majus*). The latter I wouldn't be without for picking, though I do wish it didn't grow so tall and flop over just at the peak of its beauty.

On my first trip to Sissinghurst I was completely starstruck – by the design, the history, the elegance of that famous white garden – but on my return a few years later it wasn't the mix of romance and formality I found immediately captivating, but the grass meadow out the back. To be honest, it's not that different to our unmown hay paddock in high summer, with its dog daisies, umbrellas of wild carrot and rye grasses running to seed.

Clockwise from left: 'Bridal Bouquet' hydrangeas are reputedly resistant to the chameleon effects of acid or alkaline soil, but the plants under my horse chestnut trees have turned the palest of pale blues; Portuguese laurel, *Prunus lusitanica*, makes a striking evergreen hedge with the added bonus of spring flower spires; daisies, such as Aussie brachyscomes, are a mainstay of white borders; one of my favourite summer bulbs for exotic scent is the dramatic spider lily, *Hymenocallis* 'Advance'. It has glossy, clivia-like foliage and copes with full sun or partial shade; *Echinacea* 'White Swan'.





FOGGYDALE FARM, 358 GELLING ROAD, HUNUA • FRIDAY 13 FEBRUARY, 2015 • MIDDAY-6PM

Lynda's Hunua garden is open to the public for the 2015 Heroic Garden Festival (February 14-15) to raise funds for Hospice, but we're inviting *NZ Gardener* readers to join us for a special sneak preview garden party the day before. Beat the crowds and enjoy Devonshire teas in Lynda's pop up cafe, a sausage sizzle and a boutique market with garden art, crafts, gourmet pickles & preserves, tools, produce & plants to buy. Bring cash! Plus wear a decorated floral hat and you could win a spot prize. Lynda will take a guided garden tour at 2pm. Tickets are just \$10 each (a donation to Hospice). Children welcome. Bookings are essential as parking is limited. Email mailbox@nzgardener.co.nz with 'Garden Party RSVP' in the subject line.

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Lynda's regular round-up of the best and worst performers in her Hunua garden

'GREEK MINI' BASIL: This tiny-leafed, compact basil (above) is no use for pesto – you'd need to purée the entire plant – but it's so cute that I rate it my favourite basil for vibrant verdant cushions. Seeds from Kings Seeds; seedlings from Awapuni Nurseries.

TOMATILLOS: I developed a borderline addiction to these caped green tomato lookalikes last summer. Having bought them in bulk from the farmers' market, I vowed to grow my own this year. Kings Seeds offer green and purple varieties and, though they germinate readily in warm soil, it's best to cosset the seedlings in containers until they're big enough to withstand attention from slugs and snails. Tomatillos are a key ingredient for Mexican salsa verde. Blitz them up with onion, lime juice, green chillies and fresh coriander (with optional garlic) to serve with corn chips.



This handsome French heirloom is a showstopper, with fruit averaging 12-15kg. My plants are lush and laden – and yet to show signs of powdery mildew – but I'm having a devil of a time keeping their wandering ways in check. The vines refuse to stay put in the sunny bed adjacent to my lawn and keep trying to make a run for it across the grass. I'm forever hauling them back into line.

QUINCES: Last year I vowed to take a chainsaw to my quince trees if they succumbed to this ugly leaf blight (pictured above) again. But they have, and I haven't... because for the first time in four years, they actually have a reasonable crop of fruit. Shame the trees are still such an eyesore, though. When you have a spray-free garden that's also open to the public, beauty versus bounty can be a frustrating compromise.

'QUEEN GIANT'
NECTARINES: Thanks to two
weeks of near constant muggy
drizzle in December, brown rot got the lot.

filming Get Growing in spring that my usual sowing schedule went out the window, and I didn't actually get around to putting in any courgettes until the first week of January. That means that, for the first time in almost a decade, I'm not sick of the sight of them by now. Indeed, I'm eagerly anticipating my first courgette. Any day now...

my potatoes: Usually I leave my potatoes in the ground until I want to eat them, but this year something – and here's hoping it's rabbits rather than rats – is getting in before me, scratching up the soil to nibble at the shallowest tubers. Has anyone else encountered bite marks in their baby spuds? It's rather disconcerting.









have always loved having flowers in the house but five years ago I stopped buying them. We had just bought our first house and, with decorating to do and a garden to redesign, there were other priorities for our money. It was disappointing though to have our own home at last and not be able to fill it with flowers. It seemed the logical next step was to grow my own! When harvesting your homegrown cut flowers you have two aims: to remove the flowers from the plants in a way that will encourage further blooms to form; and to maximise the time cut flowers will last.

More flowers

When cutting your flowers, pick sufficient stem for it to be trimmed and arranged comfortably in your vase, but try not to remove the whole stem from the plant. You need to leave some of the plant so that new stems and flowers can develop.

Always cut a flower stem above a leaf joint because this is where new growth and flowers will form. If you cut midway down a stem, it will die back to the leaf joint anyway and look unsightly. The one exception to this rule is alstroemerias. For this plant you should remove the whole flower stem by using your fingers to twist and pull the stem away from the base of the plant, just as you would do with rhubarb stems. If you were to cut the flowers, the plant would not receive the chemical signals necessary to encourage further flower stems to grow.

Tools for picking

Secateurs or flower snips are essential when gathering flowers. Secateurs are probably more versatile in the garden, being able to cope with more substantial stems; it is really a matter of personal choice as to which you prefer.

Whichever implement you use, it is important to keep it clean and sharp. Sap from plants can be sticky and can build up on the blades of secateurs or snips. A rub with steel wool and a quick squirt and wipe with an alcohol hand spray will keep them clean, while a regular session with a steel will maintain the sharpness needed to cut through stems rather than crushing them to pieces. Stems absorb water much more easily through clean cuts.



Plunge your cut flower stems into water as soon as you pick them, so a couple of buckets are essential when harvesting. I use some old enamel buckets that I picked up cheaply from markets. I also have a couple of tall zinc florist vases, which are useful for smaller flowers such as sweet peas.

Conditioning

This is the term used by florists to describe the steps taken to prepare a flower for arranging and to maximise the length of time that your blooms will look good in a vase. Many imported flowers go through all sorts of chemical treatments and techniques in order to keep them fresher for longer, so they can be transported around the world and are still in a condition fit for sale when they make it to supermarkets and florists.

The benefit of growing your own flowers is that they could not be any fresher.

There is no need to use chemical hormones to restrict blooms from fully opening or to put your flowers in a cold store for days to hold them back. You can simply pick them as and when you want.

There are, however, a few tips you can employ to ensure that your cut flowers last as long as possible. When you remove flowers from a plant, they are immediately put under stress. They will wilt quickly and, if not given the right care, will die.

The best time to cut flowers is early morning or early evening. Plants naturally lose water throughout the day, but this water loss, known as transpiration, is greater in heat, strong sunshine and wind. Transpiration is at its lowest rate early and late in the day, and so flowers will be under less stress if you pick them at these times.



The reality, though, with busy lives, is that sticking to this may not be possible. It is also important to remember that growing your own flowers is meant to be fun, not a chore. I often end up picking my flowers at lunchtime as this is the most convenient time of day for me. When I do, I make sure that once picked they go straight into a bucket of water and that I put the bucket in the coolest, shadiest part of the garden while I finish gathering the other flowers. In summer, however, avoid picking in the middle of the day, when the sun is at its strongest.

Preparing your flowers

You can trim and arrange your flowers at once if you want, but ideally they will benefit from spending a few hours, or even the night, somewhere cool and out of the sun – perhaps in a garage or shed.

Leave them plunged into buckets of water right up to the first flowers.

While preparing cut flowers, and once they have been arranged, do not place them near fruit and vegetables. This might seem a little strange, but the reason behind this is the gas ethylene. Ethylene is released by fruit and vegetables as they ripen and, if they are near flowers, the gas will speed up the decline of your flowers, too. (It is the same reason why you put a banana in a drawer with your green tomatoes in order to ripen them.)

Some flowers are much more sensitive than others, and this tactic really can make a difference to the longevity of your floral arrangements.

Before arranging cut flowers in a vase you need to remove all the foliage that will be below the vase waterline and then trim stems to the required length.

Cut the stem at an angle. This exposes more of the stem and allows more water to be absorbed. It also means that the stem does not sit directly on the base of the vase, which would otherwise block the ability of the stem to take in water.

If your flowers have quite thick, woody stems, say from shrubs or trees, the advice used to be that you should crush the base of each stem. Although this is recommended widely, it does not help at all. By damaging the stem you actually make it harder for it to absorb water; you also introduce lots of plant debris into the vase, which is the perfect breeding ground for bacteria.

It is much better to make a wide-angled cut to the stem and then cut vertically about 2.5cm up from the base of the stem. If flowers have been left for a while to condition they will need their stems re-trimming.

Using tepid water in your vases is preferable as this is more readily absorbed by flower stems. If you have arranged your flowers immediately after picking them, keep an eye on the water level in your vases, because flowers will absorb most water in the first few hours after cutting so the water will probably need topping up.

Where to place your vase

Where you put your vase of flowers can make a big difference as to how long they last. A shady, cool spot is preferable. Should you leave them on a hot and sunny windowsill in the height of summer, they will wilt quite quickly.

Flower food

When you buy flowers they often come with a small sachet of flower food. This is a blend of sugars (to feed the flowers) and bacteria inhibitors (to prevent the stems from becoming furred up), and is designed to make your flowers last as long as possible. You can make your own version by adding a small amount of sugar and a dash of vinegar or bleach to the water in your vase. Personally, I do not bother with all of this as some flowers do not like additives in the water.

Refreshing the water in your vase every few days is the best way to prolong the life of your flowers. If you have time, recutting the stems at an angle will also help, exposing a fresh area of stem and improving water uptake.















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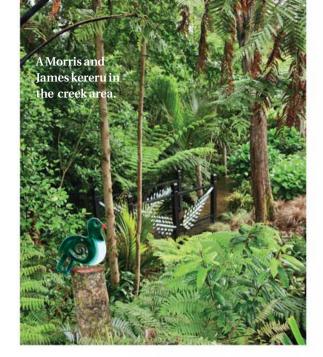
A young garden in rural Ararimu is one of the highlights of this month's Heroic Garden Festival

STORY: CAROL BUCKNELL PHOTOS: SALLY TAGG









"Because we get hard frosts out here, a lot of things grow well, and provide super colour in autumn."

oving from a small garden in inner-city Auckland to a property just shy of 2-hectares in rural Franklin could intimidate even the most experienced gardeners, but Liz and Peter Young are made of sterner stuff. Since selling their Epsom house when son Matthew "flew the coop", the couple have embraced both the country lifestyle and the development of a large garden in Ararimu with aplomb. Liz would now rather spend a few hours cutting the lawns with her ride-on mower than sipping lattes in city cafes, while Peter has become a master of the electric shears, keeping the many metres of hedges in the garden immaculately trimmed using just his eye as a guide.

"After Matthew got married we realised we didn't actually have to be in the city any longer," says Liz. "We looked at everything – town houses and apartments down by the water – but we got cold feet. We didn't want to go north; we kept moving in this direction. A local real estate agent clung on to us and kept suggesting places further and further south until eventually she got us to look at this property."

The couple were impressed. The house faces north with to-die-for views of regenerating native bush and forest on covenanted land, and the bones of a garden were already there thanks to the landscape designer who first established it. It was a done deal, and seven years later there are absolutely no regrets, although it has been a steep learning curve, says Liz.

"It took me ages to come to grips with the conditions here – such a different way of gardening than in the city. The whole garden has to survive on rain water. It dries out a lot in February."

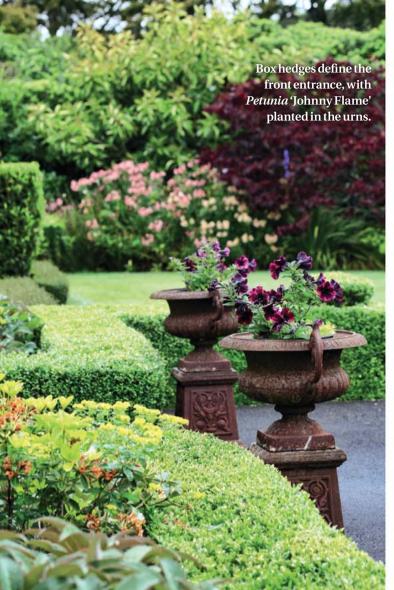
It's hard to imagine this verdant garden looking parched when you see it in early summer. The lawns are smooth and green and the foliage of the long griselinia hedge bordering the driveway is lush and shiny. As you approach the house beside the parking area there's a row of flowering cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis* 'Awanui') trees draped in light green leaves. In spring their fragrant white blossoms greet lucky visitors as they arrive at the house.

The wine-red leaves of a claret ash (*Fraxinus oxycarpa* 'Raywoodii') in the lawn directly opposite the front entrance contrast dramatically with their green surroundings. The red is repeated in the foliage of a pair of Japanese maples on either side of the front door, one is an *Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Crimson King' and the other *Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Crimson Queen'. These and most of the other trees, shrubs and hedges that form the structure of the garden were planted by the previous owner and Liz is gradually learning their botanic names.

Wide borders on either side of the house planted with a diverse mix of trees, shrubs and perennials. Forest pansy (*Cercis canadensis*) and *Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia' stand like bright beacons amid camellias, daylilies, lavenders, abutilon, snow tussock (*Chionochloa flavicans*), lamb's ear, alstroemeria, roses and dahlias to name just a few. Scissorhands Peter clips corokia, westringia and other shrubs into perfect spheres, creating sculptural interest in the borders.

A succession of stately deciduous trees is planted in the lawns that flow around the house. There's a plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*), a pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), a liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and a tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*), the leaves of the latter two trees a striking red in autumn, says Liz. "When we first came here I struggled because there was no shade around the house. But the trees have grown so much in five years. A lot of things grow well here and because we get hard frosts out here, they provide super colour in autumn."







Clockwise from above: Bottlebrush flowers; Forest pansy (*Cercis canadensis*) leaves; Pink alstroemeria harmonises with the dark red leaves of forest pansy.





"I do all the mowing on the ride-on. It gives me a sense of freedom."

On the west side of the garden a path winds through the border, down the slope to the vegetable area, fenced to keep the rabbits out. Rats are also a problem; they had just devoured Liz's sunflower seedlings on the day we visited. Flourishing passionfruit vines and the semi-double David Austin rose 'Golden Showers' disguise the wire structure while a hedge of *Photinia x fraseri* 'Red Robin', with its striking red new leaves, screens the wind. "The southerly rolls in down here," says Peter.

Inside the enclosure raised beds are bountiful, with vegetables and herbs, including strawberries. But how do they maintain such a flourishing edible garden within the limitations of tank water? "The farmer who originally owned the property connected us back to the farm bore so we are quite self-sufficient," says Liz. "I was brought up on a farm and we always had a large vege garden. In town, where we used to live, they had to be quite tiddly, so it's nice to have enough land to have a big vegetable garden."

Another item on her garden wish-list was an olive walk, which now flows down the slope from the north-west corner of the front lawn to fields below via a mown path.

"I wanted something that would tolerate the dryness and wind. We used to walk around One Tree Hill when we lived in town, and I always loved the olive trees."

But her favourite element in the garden is the lawn. "It's something I always wanted, a lovely lawn. I do all the mowing on the ride-on. It gives me a sense of freedom, especially when I am mowing the curved paths through the long grass in the paddocks."

A regime of spraying and feeding twice a year helps the lawn keep its emerald-green good looks, and regular applications of blood and bone do the same job for the immaculately clipped box hedging around the entrance gardens. Although Peter jokes that trimming the many hedges around the property "takes 10 years off my life", he wouldn't have it any other way.

"If I get a bit of steam up I can get it done quite quickly. People say why don't you get someone in to do it, but they wouldn't work to our standard, nor our pace."

There's no better example of this couple's impressive work ethic than their creek restoration project. The tiny water course runs down the eastern side of their boundary,









Clockwise from above: St Francis circled by corokia; Box hedging; Potted mint; The kitchen garden; View from the deck; Hybrid abutilon; Cape fuchsia.





bordered by existing stands of totara, ponga and other native trees. The couple have not only revegetated this area, planting kauri, nikau, rewarewa, kahikatea and other smaller species, but they've also built an impressive boardwalk alongside the creek, which is linked by two handsome bridges.

Peter was the builder; Liz did the design and planning. It was quite tricky calculating the ratio of risers and treads, she admits. "We used a fan effect to get around the curves. Many of the posts are salvaged from organic collections and friends' properties. We built it all without disturbing any of the existing bush. There's still a lot to do; it's a work in progress."

This month, on February 14 and 15, they're opening their garden to the public for the Heroic Garden Festival, although they acknowledge it will be a challenge to keep it looking good through to February if we have a dry summer. They're used to having people viewing their garden, as garden clubs from other regions often include it in their itineraries, but this is their first festival. "Hospice is a good charity," says Liz. "And we're looking forward to the festival, as people will have more time to linger in the garden that those groups which visit on a schedule."







When she downsized, Chris Fletcher didn't want to give up any of her favourite flowers, so her tiny garden in the centre of Blenheim is simply jam-packed with blooms

STORY: JO MCCARROLL PHOTOS: SALLY TAGG

hris Fletcher is clearly a gardener with a grand vision. Her last garden – 1ha, in between the vines at Rocenvin Estate Vineyard, Marlborough – featured a classic formal potager, ponds, cottage borders and around 300 roses. Although the Blenheim city section she moved onto in 2012 is rather more bijou – she estimates there's about 100m² of garden space – Chris certainly didn't find having a small garden any barrier to having big ideas. Her patch features 60-odd roses, a rill, a fountain and a long perennial border packed with colour.

"I knew I wanted a really pretty garden," Chris says. "Full of flowers and roses. Really I wanted a garden just jam-packed with everything I liked."

Chris had bought the property a few years before, planning to eventually retire there with husband Colin. "But he told me it was the very worst thing I had ever done in my life," she says.

"He said there was no way he was ever going to move to town and he was going to stay living at the vineyard until they carried him out in a box. Whereas I knew that one day I wanted to live somewhere you didn't step outside and find 25ha of work looking at you."

Sadly, Colin passed away in 2011 and Chris spent a year "fluffing about" in her old house on the vineyard before she felt ready to move.

"I hadn't even worked in my old garden for months," she says. "My daughter eventually said to me, 'Look, you have to get going again, get back into the garden.' So I walked out the door, looked at the garden, and thought did I actually do all this? And I shot back inside."

Deciding the garden and the house were too big for her to manage on her own, Chris arranged for the old villa on her town property to be removed, and built her own house there in its place.















Top, left to right: Chris has this rill, another fountain and a birdbath in her garden. She finds the sound of water cooling; Mirrors create a sense of space; Her buxus is not yet affected by blight but Chris does have to spray for mealybug.

"It was amazing to start again somewhere new," she says. "I was able to do anything I wanted, it was all my ideas and all from my own mind. It was exactly what I needed right then."

Having come from a very large garden, Chris knew she wanted a smaller one. But she still wanted a perennial border and had hankered for a rose-covered pagoda ever since she saw one in *NZ Gardener's* Homegrown Roses special edition.

Chris wanted all her favourite plants in her new garden too, so while the house was being built she grew on cuttings from everything she could.

"Although I could only do it when my daughter wasn't looking! She was always saying, 'Mum your new garden isn't big enough, you can't take that!""

The first area Chris tackled was the space outside the garage – a job that immediately made her feel at home.

"When I dug the first hole, I was greeted by an almighty clang as I hit the rocks and concrete that had been dumped there. Our last property used to be a riverbed so to dig a hole you needed a crowbar to get the rocks out."

The area in front of the house is now planted in greens and white, and features the roses 'Margaret Merril', 'Sally Holmes' and 'White Romance'.













As you move through the gate into the garden proper, the perennial border starts with flowers in every imaginable pink and then shades through to burgundy and purple. Around the corner the colours change again, going from soft corals to dark orange.

Chris' roses provide colour all spring. Three 'Constance Spry' on the western fence are a sea of pink in full bloom. "It looks so beautiful. The only downside is it only flowers once."

At the back of the house, another firm favourite 'Crepuscle' also puts on a spectacular show. Working in a smaller garden means Chris can lavish a bit more individual attention on her rose bushes – she sprays regularly with a chemical control product, protects them from fungal infection with a dose of copper at the start of the season, uses various biofeed products and a good serve of rose fertiliser, topped up with extra potassium.



Top: Chris Fletcher in her garden. Bottom: The back wall is painted Resene 'Salsa'. Chris has used this same colour for a feature wall in the house, another wall in the garden, and for all the wrought iron and her garage door.















But from around January, it's the dahlias that provide the most flower power here, outdoing even the repeat-flowering roses for colour.

"The dahlias start in January and go on until the first frost. I like decorative dahlias which are about 4 or 5 feet high and have big flower heads, the size of a bread and butter plate."

If you can drag your eyes away from these scene-stealers, there are plenty of other floral delights to be enjoyed. Various clematis scramble up the fence, while hollyhocks, foxgloves, daylilies and irises dot the borders.

Chris likes dianthus too, but they haven't done too well for her here – she attributes it to her heavy clay soil, since dianthus need drainage.

"I did manage to get one 'Otaki Pink' established in a pot," she says. "But the lawn man whipped the top off it the other day when doing the edges with his whippersnippers!" There's foliage interest too, with heucheras, box and *Acer* 'Crimson Queen', but Chris never intended this to be a garden for all seasons.

"I don't worry about autumn and winter," she admits. "At the end of the season, I prune the roses, cut all the perennials back, mulch everything and say goodnight to it all until spring comes again."

Chris's last garden at the vineyard (which featured in *NZ Gardener* in August 2007) was a staple of Garden Marlborough, with the focus on her classy potager there. This year, her new town garden was part of the festival for the first time and 350-odd visitors had a chance to see the floral fantasy land hidden behind the fence.

"People were amazed," she says. "No one expects it. And people are pleased to see what I've done in a small space."

But a smaller space doesn't always mean less work, Chris has found.

"In a large garden, you do things totally differently. We would work in our last garden for six weeks in spring, cut all the hedges, fertilise and then walk away. With the vineyard, we didn't have time to be in the garden all the time. With this garden, I do a lot more to each plant. With such a small space, you can strive for perfection."





t Bayfair Community Garden boxes and bags are being filled with produce for Tauranga's Foodbank, a scene that has played out every Tuesday for the past 20 years.

"People think there aren't any poor in Tauranga but it's just that they don't have a public face," garden co-ordinator Jo Stock says. "I always say you could pay \$20 a year for a plot at a community garden and grow purple carrots and pink cabbages – or you could come here and do something for the needy."

A retired secondary school nutrition teacher, Jo has been overseeing volunteers here for 18 years. The Arataki site has its own bore (although the pump is an ongoing issue), five-bin compost system and worm farm. "This place runs on the smell of an oily rag," Jo says. "Just \$1000 a year to grow almost 400 boxes of veges for the foodbank. I beg, borrow and scrounge all sorts."

Jo, who plants by the moon, starts most seed at her place. "But my eyesight isn't too good just now," she says, "I'm waiting for a cataract operation. Because it was easier I sprinkled out a whole packet of 'Buttercrunch' lettuce – and the whole lot came up!"

For the past two years Jo has left laterals on the garden's tomatoes, saying they help the plants hold each other up and that the size of the crop hasn't suffered. "Anything that is less work is something we'll try," she laughs.

Unfortunately, half the garden has succumbed to club root, a brassica disease brought in on unsterilised sheep manure nine years ago. Volunteers have built raised beds to isolate crops from the ground, tools are sterilised and there is a disinfectant foot bath for people moving between the areas.

When planting they use a mix of two dessertspoons of salt and half a teaspoon of potassium permanganate in nine litres of water and add three cups to each hole, something that Jo says helps sterilise the ground.

The garden produces staple seasonal fruit and veges, but Jo gave up on eggplants after foodbank clients wouldn't take them. "I even included recipe sheets, but Kiwis are terrible at trying new things," she says. "They were suspicious of capsicums till they tried them. Now they fly out the door."

To volunteer or offer help, phone 07 575 9709 and leave a message for Jo.

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What do traffic lights, sucked gobstoppers and bruises have in common? They change colour if you hang around long enough

hings which slip from one hue to another always fascinate. In nature the ultimate shifters are leaves blazing goodbye in autumn, but some are equally interesting saying hello in spring when they do the whole process in reverse. Take Japanese maples – photinias and pieris too – which begin the season in flashes of fire, then mellow and resort to green for a civilized summer. Other plants, flowers in particular, have a habit of fading attractively in summer and as they do, revealing hidden pigments which provide unexpected glamour.

If, like me, you've left a sofa unprotected by a sunny window, you may not equate fading to something to be embraced with glee, but certain plants turn maturity into a virtue and like a retro pair of designer jeans, they just get more interesting the more stonewashed, ripped and distressed they become. Such transforming flowers are the ones which tend to be naturally good for drying – the sorts which are tough in texture with a naturally low water content. Bract-like flower parts, such as on flowering dogwoods and the many euphorbias, are naturally good turners, but it's the hydrangeas which most effortlessly shift through the gears. Speckled pinks, purples, amethysts and even a racy dash of purple if the weather is right (that's

dry and gently cooling)... and all this within a single flowerhead. It's a dazzling mosaic mystery and a large hydrangea in full flight has the ability to stop you in your tracks with all the antique shades of a Tiffany lampshade or the ink-marbled inside jacket of an old book. A reliable hydrangea for its fading tints is 'Preziosa', which slips from pinks and whites to a robust red, but green-tinged sorts like 'Annabelle' and the paniculata hybrids are exciting too, reliably tipping into white before blushing in glowing, speckled pinks.



Persicaria affinis

The fleece flower, with its drumstick blooms in myriad candycane shades, is native to the rocky Himalayan slopes and so suits rockeries or being grown over paving or down walls. Unusually, the whole plant turns chestnut brown rather than truly packing up shop for winter and the effect may be an acquired taste, but trim it and it will spring back in late spring to repeat the performance.



Sedum 'Red Cauli'

One of the best of the new sedums, 'Red Cauli' has perhaps the reddest flowers of all. In my garden it tends to be a bit lanky at 30cm and needs propping up owing to its telephium blood. However, if you give it a rich soil and plenty of sunshine, you'll be rewarded with glaucous purple-tinged leaves and then cauliflower-like blooms which fade to russet seedheads. Combine with black mondo grass (Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens') and late-flowering red Hesperantha coccinea.

Cornus kousa 'Satomi'

With a rich acidic soil and cooler climate, the flowering dogwoods are the must-have plants, offering both the appeal of autumn colour and those flamboyant bracts surrounding the tiny flowers. Some species are pure white and some are ruby red but 'Satomi' sits in the middle ground, with rosy pink bracts on its sunnier flanks but sometimes white flowers too on its shady south aspect. This is an exceptionally free-flowering cultivar with good autumn colour and attractive fruit in hot years. It's available from most nurseries.



Lunaria annua

Often called honesty or silver dollar plant after its flattened seedcases which light up the winter garden (or the vase) with the sun behind, but are equally attractive in late summer as they change from green to purplish red. After flowering this biennial will die, so allow the seed cases to remain so it self-seeds, giving you clouds of mauve crucifer flowers in early spring which combine well with the gold hues of polyanthus and kerria. Look out for the rarer, white-flowered form and varieties with variegated leaves.



Mexican daisy

Erigeron karvinsianus used to be popular for its daisies in shades from rose to white and its long flowering period (nearly all year in mild regions), but is now classed as a weed. If you already have it, don't give it away or let it spread as it gets into delicate native habitats and pushes out indigenous species. Young plants have fibrous roots and are easily dug or pulled up, but seedlings are numerous, especially in light soils, so control with a herbicide such as Roundup.



One of those statuesque and beefy plants you need to give more puny flowers something to lean on. Every part of it is attractive, from the initially pink, star-shaped flowers on a branching red stalk to the scalloped leaves, but this beauty takes time to establish, so dig plenty of compost or leaf mould into the soil and give it a stream or pond bank, as well as a little partial shade through the day to encourage it to bulk up. From Wake Robin Nursery.







The sedums are another plant group worth watching. Their descent to winter brown can vary depending on the situation and the base colour they begin with. Good old *Sedum* 'Herbstfreude' is still one of the best and though it begins an unremarkable, almost muddy pink, in an exposed and cool garden, you may end up with heads of glowing ruby red by autumn. Not dissimilar is the way that the tight heads of rodgersias mature. This is a noble plant for a damp position in any part of the country that gets a cold winter. The flowers float like candyfloss above muscular leaves and show their resilience as they stand tall through winter, fading from creams to pinks and then deep brick reds before the leaves die down. The fading of flowers is so intriguing because two or three colours jostling together on one plant creates something akin to the shimmer of a glitterball or a fish's scales. Heleniums are

colours jostling together on one plant creates something akin to the shimmer of a glitterball or a fish's scales. Heleniums are great plants for this – all the colours of a bonfire within one flurry of daisies, as yellows become russets then bleed into coppery reds. In this bevy of pinks, the heat of helenium is something of an anomaly and another almost unique colour combination is that of the old favourite, China rose *Rosa* x odorata 'Mutabilis'. For much of the year in mild localities, bushes can be smothered with both the freshly opened soft apricot flowers as well as the ragged older blooms in the deep rose pink to which they fade. A smaller bush, the perennial wall flower *Erysimum* 'Pastel Patchwork' (available from Parva Plants), offers nearly the same fruit salad blend of shades.

Before it became a noxious outlaw, the introduced daisy *Erigeron karvinskianus* used to delight gardeners with its myriad daisies dancing the jig in a glittering medley of white, pink and rose. Now the classic Mexican daisy is classed as a weed, but sterile cultivars are available – look for *Erigeron* 'LA Pink' at your garden centre, which will give you the same effect of a froth of pink and white with no guilt. Or try *Persicaria affinis*, a now hard-to-find little polygonum which covers itself in clubs of flowers which open the palest pink before maturing to a deep rose and eventually turning russet brown.

Of course it's not just flowers which transform as they age; seeds too can turn on the charm. Honesty, that reliable biennial of hedge bases, can offer up little windows of wonder as its disk-like cases ripen and the drying tissues turn the colours of stained glass. The process doesn't last long, but all the more reason to catch those small moments of magic.

Hydrangea serrata 'Preziosa'

Species hydrangeas are often more refined than the macrophylla types and this is certainly true of 'Preziosa', whose colour range is little affected by soil pH. The small mopheads emerge green before becoming creamy lemon, then white, pink, blue and finally red. The wiry stems are attractively dark and reach about 1.4m. Give it water in summer and partial shade for the longest show. Let it flop over purple Japanese maples or combine with warm dahlias and blood grass (*Imperata cylindrica*).

And again, Japanese maples prove themselves worthy of a space in even the smallest garden. Even without their autumn and spring colours and lightness of shape they would be worth a place in every garden just for their helicopter seeds which, in the purple-leaved varieties, turn a rich scarlet as a portent to the autumnal delights round the corner.



Japanese meadowsweet

I still can't tell if this clever little shrub produces white flowers that mature to pink or actually sends up simultaneously the two colours at once, as is often claimed, but either way the effect is memorable. Spiraea japonica (pictured is the variety 'Shirobana') are perhaps not the most exciting of plants, but they are a good size for small gardens and flower when most shrubs have already done their dash. Be sure to prune hard after flowering or in early spring for the biggest flowers.



Actinidia kolomikta

An unusual relative of the kiwifruit, originating from Korea, China and Japan, and grown not primarily for its fruit (which are small but still tasty in female clones) but for its unique leaves that look like they have been tagged by graffiti artists. Not every leaf, but most, bear white tips which age to pink. This twining vine is long-lived and vigorous, ideal for a shaded wall if it is well wired. But protect the base from cats, who find it irresistible. From Green Leaf Nurseries.



Xanthe White probes beyond the prickles of the old lady pincushion cactus and finds it's a softie at heart

PORTRAIT: EMMA BASS

- I've been wanting to interview a cactus for a while now. My son reignited my interest with a common cactus he bought from the garden centre. It ended up following him to school, and sleeping by his bed. It reminded me what impressive plants you are. Examples of resilience, leafless and patient, storing water between rains in thorn-covered forms.
- A I'm pleased you described us in that way; it's not actually correct, yet it's how most people think of cacti. We do have leaves. Every thin thorn is a highly modified leaf; stripped back to its absolute spine and working differently from most other leaves on the planet, but still they are leaves.
- So if your leaves are just spines, are they simply to reduce grazing and protect the water stored in your stem?
- This is certainly part of their function and you are right in that all our water is kept in our stem. Given the conditions in which we grow, where it can be months without a drop of rain, this is pretty valuable but they do more than just that. Not only do we need to conserve water, we also need protection from the burning heat of the desert environment. Though fine, the spines create shade and reduce airflow. I know you're from an island so you think of breezes as cooling but in a desert, winds are hot and burning.
- **Q** So if your leaves are only spines, how do you photosynthesise?
- A Once again, this process has been moved to the stems. Unlike other plant families, which have thin stems and lush leaves, you will notice our stems are plump. This is where we photosynthesise and you'll also notice the colour here is more leaf-like, ranging from silvery-blues to greens.
- **Q** That's fascinating, and it does make sense when you consider the conditions you grow under. So it is the plant structure that identifies a cactus?

- A Well, if you expect an insect to find you in a desert there's no room for subtlety. We are mostly from the Americas with only one species, *Rhipsalis baccifera*, occurring outside of here, in Sri Lanka and Africa. It's a continent of colour!
- Q You that is *Mammillaria hahniana* have one feature that is very defining, which we haven't mentioned. Despite your thorns you look as soft and silky as an angora rabbit. Is this a trick or does it also serve a purpose? It looks rather like insulation.
- It's down and, yes, you could call it insulation. It helps to keep temperatures even. I'm from the sub-mountainous part of Mexico and although I was once common, the habitats where I'm found are disappearing. Our fruit is edible, but that's not the main reason we have been under threat. Plant collectors gathering specimens made us quite valuable on the black market and in such remote areas, it was easy for those needing money to make some income from this trade. Now though we are well-propagated so our natural populations are not under such threat.
- So you are a rarity?
- A You won't find us in rows at the garden centre here in New Zealand, but if you like how we look you should try the more common *Sulcorebutia spp*. Like me, they flower through spring and summer and come in a vast range of colours.
- That's unfortunate; I was rather hoping I might find a place for you in my garden I rather like your common name:
 Old lady pincushion.
- A Thank you but I kind of like that I'm not on everyone's window sill it means when people notice you they are a little bit captivated. It's still nice to see the magic light up in a plant lover's eyes.
- Thank you. You certainly have inspired me.







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Have you seen signs of termites?



Australian subterranean termites can damage many wood products including timber house framing, fencing, wooden landscaping and trees.

Occasionally these termites are found in New Zealand and the Ministry for Primary Industries is keen to locate any populations and eradicate them.

Signs to look out for

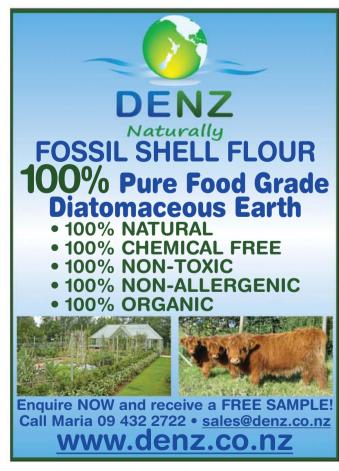
These termites are most likely to be associated with imported wood products such as Australian hardwood railway sleepers which are commonly used in landscaping. You will generally see signs of their activity before you see termites themselves.

Signs include "mudding" where the termites pack mud in timber structures, or create mud tunnels up walls or across open ground.

You may also see flying reproductive termites (called alates) over the warmer summer months.

Report signs of termite activity immediately Call 0800 80 99 66

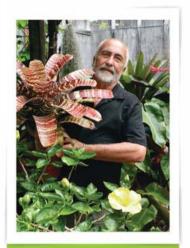
New Zealand Government





X FROM NORTH TO SOUTH X





74 NORTHLAND

Midsummer may be a time of plenty in the vege patch, but for our experts it's no time to rest on your laurels

in February



76 AUCKLAND



78 BAY OF PLENTY



80 TARANAKI



82 HAWKE'S BAY



84 KAPITI COAST



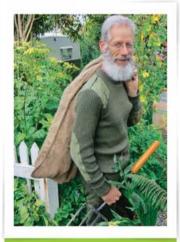
86 NELSON



88 AKAROA



90 DUNEDIN



92 SOUTHLAND



When asked how to use cherimoya, I tell customers they should take off their clothes and lie down by the pool to eat them, so they can swim off the syrupy juice that runs down their chin and arms

ark Twain once described cherimoya (*Annona cherimola*) as "deliciousness itself".

They are indeed the most delicious of fruits. The best of them have creamy, soft, melting flesh with a hint of ripe pear and banana, the acidic tang of pineapple and the zing of ripe raspberries. It is a fruit salad flavour with a richness and complexity that is hard to match in any other fruit.

The name cherimoya derives from the local name where they originate in the cooler valleys of the Andes of Peru and Ecuador and they grow very well here in Northland, Auckland and Bay of Plenty as long as they have good wind shelter and frosts are minimal. They're not fussy about soil as long as it's not waterlogged or too dry. Cherimoyas are lush with foliage all winter but deciduous very briefly in November or December.

"Custard apple" is the common name often given to cherimoya, but this isn't strictly correct.

The custard apple is a hybrid between the cherimoya and the sugar apple, a much more tropical species. The custard apple, or atemoya, is sweeter and less tangy than the cherimoya. Despite cherimoyas' wonderful flavour, the skin and leaves have insecticidal properties, which account for the total lack of bug damage.

The fruit ripen between September and Christmas and weigh between 300g and 2kg each, so the brittle branches need propping to support the mighty fruit. They are a handsome small tree to about 4 or 5m but need to be pruned hard every year to keep them compact and physically sturdy enough to handle the weight of fruit without collapsing.

Grafted trees will bear in the second year, with guaranteed deliciousness, but seedlings take about five years and fruit quality is likely to be inferior.

The tiny beetles that pollinate cherimoya are not plentiful until the trees are larger, so hand pollinating younger trees in January and February is the way to ensure good fruit production.

Each flower lasts two days. For the first 36 hours they are female and the petals open only slightly. At about 4pm of the second day the flower becomes male, producing pollen as the petals open fully, exposing the stamens. Using a kid's paintbrush you can collect the pollen from a male flower and then push it up into the centre of a flower in the female phase, twirling the paintbrush around for maximum coverage of the ovaries.

Why not have a pollination party?

The pollen and petals have fallen by nightfall but of course it's sun-over-the-yardarm time before then, so it can be a plausible excuse for an alfresco cocktail party with a difference. Best do the pollination first while your aim is still good.

Cherimoya are ready to be picked once you can hear the seeds rattle inside the fruit when it's shaken.

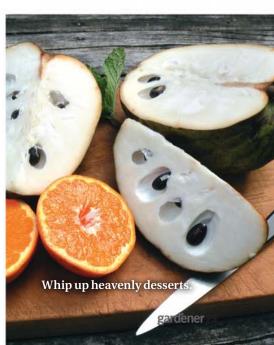
They are usually still green-skinned when ripe and are best eaten just as they begin to soften. Once picked, they ripen in a few days at room temperature. We usually just cut the fruit into big wedges and eat them like watermelon, spitting out the bean-sized seeds, preferably while lying on the lawn with a cold beer close at hand.

I once heard cherimoya called "died-and-gone-to-heaven fruit"

and a dessert that comes close to heaven is made by peeling, deseeding and chopping the fruit into a cocktail glass and squeezing fresh orange or lime juice over it with a shredded mint leaf. Leave it to chill in the fridge before serving with a glass of fine Riesling to wash it down.









February is the worst month for pests in my vege patch. I swear at times I can hear the mandibles of caterpillars crunching through crops and the slurp as the sap-sucking aphids and thrips extract their lunch from my dinner

ut our bug man Ruud Kleinpaste told me he likes February best of all, because if it's too sunny to go to work you can lie on the grass instead and watch clouds of winged mother aphids and thrips flying through the sky looking for new food sources. I told him the idea that hordes of new pests had taken to the air, and were seeking out the few plants in my garden thus far unmolested, was of less comfort to me than he might suppose.

As if an airborne invasion wasn't enough to worry about, the Aussies are on the attack this month too.

Citrus whitefly arrived in New Zealand from Australia about 10 years ago, and is now established almost everywhere, and a real pest in warm places. They are a sap-sucker and, like all sap-suckers, excrete a sweet honeydew as waste. Black sooty mould, which feeds on the honeydew, then appears. (So if your citrus is affected by sooty mould, it's a symptom of an infestation of some kind.

Deal with the infestation and the sooty mould should clear itself up.) You can normally tell very easily if your trees are infected by whitefly: knock a branch and a cloud of tiny moth-like creatures will fly out. You might also notice the leaves turning yellow and the bottom of the leaves will feel rough - whiteflies both lay their eggs and spend most of their time feeding on the under-side of leaves, so if you are spraying, be sure to spray from the bottom as well as from above. Sadly, by the time you notice these symptoms this month, your citrus is well infected by adult whitefly and there's not much you can do to knock them back - better to wait and target them in late spring or early summer when they are at a more vulnerable life-stage. Ruud told me I could give my infected lime a blast of Neem oil every couple of weeks, but it would be mainly serve to make myself feel better. Whiteflies are renowned for their ability to develop resistance to chemical treatment so, if you are using a chemical control, repeated soaking with the same product is not advised. Instead, alternate the treatment you are using.

Ironically, Orchamoplatus citri is only a minor pest in Australia.

There are a number of beneficial insect species that predate on it there, whereas it has no natural predators that are native to New Zealand. There have been some promising results, however, in citrus-growing regions from the release of Serangium maculigerum ladybirds, which eat both the whiteflies and its larvae - they are another Aussie native that is well-established in Northland and was last month released in three citrus orchards in Gisborne. If they prove effective there, and spread through the district, then they might eventually help home gardeners control citrus whitefly too.

Tomato fruit worms are munching on your tomatoes this month.

While it targets these and other veges, such as peppers and beans, it likes the sugary sweetness of corn the best – hence its other name: corn ear worm. To keep 'em off your toms, plant a stand of sacrificial corn nearby. They will target that, and leave your tomatoes alone.

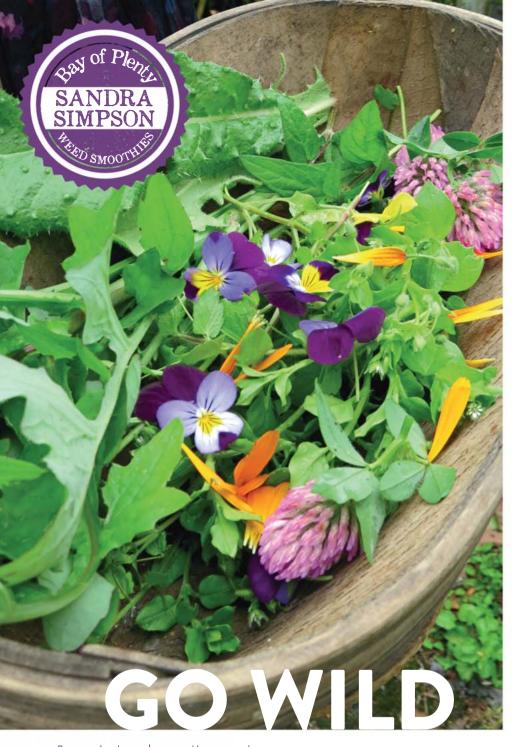
Two-spotted spider mite will be rampant, especially after a dry spell.

Look under the leaves of your roses and frangipani to spot the fine gossamer of mite webbing. If you see it, spray with your hose every evening, mites hate being wet and cold so it will slow them down (although use a fungicide spray before you begin this regime, wet foliage is prone to fungal infection). I told Ruud I sprayed my passionfruit vine every day - a reader told me it disturbs passionvine hoppers enough to help control the population. But Ruud rubbished this and said I was simply giving passionvine hoppers the humidity they adore. I'd be better to wait until the hoppers laid their eggs in autumn and then cut out any egg-bearing branches. All daily spraying with a hose would give me was really clean hoppers, he said.

But Ruud did give me a good tip about controlling white butterflies.

We all know they target brassicas, but Ruud told me nasturtiums are another host plant. If you have them around your vege patch, cut them back or inspect regularly for caterpillars and eggs.





Recently I took a walk around the garden of Pyes Pa herbalist Julia Sich. It's a garden you might charitably call overgrown... although Julia prefers to use the word "verdant"

he plants we're seeking haven't been sown into pots or beds, don't get fertilised and aren't hand watered, but they're growing anyway – some of them from cracks in the concrete – and it's this resilience, Julia reckons, they pass on when we consume them. For the past five years she has drunk two green smoothies a day, made from a mix of fruit, fats and weeds. She points out the Scotch thistle across from her snug cottage. Every part of it is edible, she says: stalks, roots and leaves. A leaf of oxtongue and some blackberry leaves, just as high in vitamin C as the fruit, go into the trug, too.

Julia heard about smoothies made from weeds from Wally Richards.

He recommended them to her after she suffered a stroke, brought on by a serious autoimmune illness, although she admits it took her a couple of years to "take the leap" and introduce them to her diet. Brought up in Wairarapa and Manawatu, Julia has a diploma in horticulture from Massey University and once upon a time grew herbs for Weleda in Havelock North.

She moved from suburban Tauranga to her parents' property in upper Pyes Pa two years ago. Both her 83-year-old parents have taken up the daily green smoothie habit, too – and dad John has even stopped spraying weeds, a bit of a sea change for this lifelong farmer. "We grow up with the idea that gardens and homes need to be neat and tidy, and we judge people who don't live like that as somehow not being good or worthy, but it means nothing," she says.

Blending is the optimal way to consume plants, as it makes every last nutrient available for absorption.

Blending breaks down the cell walls, Julia says. Chewing is not nearly as efficient, although she still recommends adding wild leaves and flowers to salads, and as part of a trial to improve her gut health with probiotics she has begun fermenting wild plants such as kawakawa, ginger and self-heal with cabbage.

Now she's hoping to convince other gardeners to throw in the trowel.

She's written a guide to how edible weeds and green smoothies can improve your health and well-being - Julia's Guide to Edible Weeds and Wild Green Smoothies - which is available from her in paper form or can be downloaded from her website (juliasedibleweeds.com). Since 2012 Julia has been taking Wild about Weeds workshops, talking to groups all over the country. "It's taken me almost 60 years, but I've finally found what I love doing," she says. "I guess I'm just a late bloomer." She especially wants to show me Galinsoga parviflora, one of the few plants Julia is deliberately growing in a pot as she is still discussing it with her father, who knows it as the crop weed gallant soldier. "In Colombia, it's known as guascas and used as a vegetable, but farmers here don't like it much."



Bitterness is a notable feature of the taste of many common weeds.Although Julia says it's a taste humans

thought nothing of... until we met sugar.
"Carrot tops and beetroot leaves were
quite normal as food in 16th century

"Carrot tops and beetroot leaves were quite normal as food in 16th century Europe and that bitter taste stimulates the saliva glands," she says. "But once cane sugar was widely available, people's palates changed."

In fact, many weeds are superfoods, and positively jammed with nutrients. "I read somewhere that a Westerner, on average, eats 15 different vegetables a year, but that an indigenous person living in a traditional way will eat more than a thousand different plants in a year.

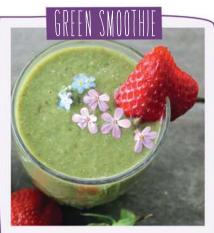
"To me, that says we need to get our phytochemicals and nutrients from a wide variety of sources. So let's call this preventative medicine.

"Include weeds in your diet and, if nothing else, you'll be getting fibre, chlorophyll, vitamins and minerals from the plants. But many of them are what you might call wild herbs and they have other benefits, too. For instance, red clover flowers are a blood builder and purslane, or wild portulaca, is rich in omega-3 oils."

As she talks, Julia passes me a leaf of sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) to try, and with the first nibble my mouth is full of a delicious, citrusy zing.

Wild food comes with a warning, however – and a serious one at that.

Before eating anything, learn to identify plants, as not all poisonous plants are unpalatable and not all palatable plants should be eaten in quantity. (There's a good guide to common weeds that are edible, with photos, on Julia's website.) Being guided by whether animals or birds partake of the plant is not safe, either.



Ingredients: • A big handful of mixed weeds, such as galinsoga, lamb's quarters, chickweed, dandelion, plantain and amaranth • 2 bananas • 1 kiwifruit • 1 cup strawberries, raspberries or blueberries • ½ avocado • 2 cups of water

In a blender, add the greens with the water and whizz. Add the fruit (if you use blueberries the mix will become a chocolate colour) and blend again. Pour into your glass and decorate with fruit or flowers. Drink one glass in the morning, and put the rest in the fridge ready for your afternoon smoothie. There are more recipes on Julia's website, juliasedibleweeds.com.

You also need to ensure the plants you harvest have not been sprayed

or grown in contaminated soil. Julia suggests sampling new edibles in small amounts, even if you are confident in your plant identification. If you have no adverse effect after some time, a little more can be eaten.

"It's good to be curious," Julia says, "but you need to know what you're doing. If you don't know what you are doing, don't eat it."

For the time being, she's leaving scarlet pimpernel out of her mixes after conflicting research about its safety.

Right, time for that smoothie.

As well as the weeds, Julia whizzes half an avocado (fat, to make us feel full – coconut cream could have been used instead), grapefruit juice and pulp (for flavour) and a banana and blueberries (for sweetness).

It tastes a bit fruity and definitely healthy, but quite palatable. Plus there are no food miles, and it's fresh and free!



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February can be a quiet time in the flowering garden for us. It may sound bizarre to those who live in drier climates, but the mid-to-late-summer period is largely green here

e don't irrigate and rarely water anything except the vegetable garden. That is the advantage of summer rainfall. It is currently the hydrangeas that bring the most summer colour.

We have never gone in for summer bedding plants and any annuals are self seeded, so more inclined to make a show in the earlier months of spring and summer. There aren't a lot of trees and shrubs that bloom in midsummer and most bulbs peak from later in autumn through to spring. Essentially, it is perennials that give the summer colour and we have only just started getting to grips with that group of plants on a larger scale.

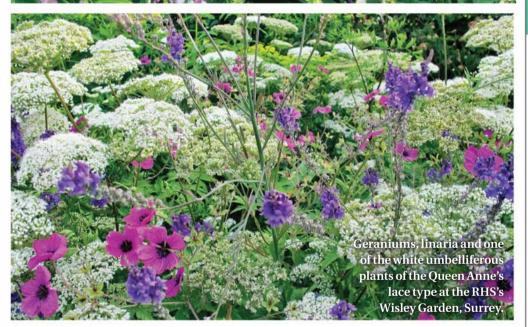
We have recently made two trips to England to see summer gardens.

We do late winter and spring gardens very well here in Taranaki, but summer gardens have been a steep learning curve for us. What is interesting about the modern English plantings – heavily influenced as many are by Dutchman Piet Oudolf – is that they have shaken up the labour-intensive classic herbaceous border into styles which are more sustainable, easier to manage and contemporary in style. This means they are cheaper to run too.

Our conditions are not the same, so there is a trial and error process. We are looking for a midline.

Mass plantings of a single variety, a trend much favoured by modern landscapers both here and overseas, are not for us. Frankly, we find them dull in most situations. But too often, underplanting with perennials may aim to be "cottage garden style", or maybe layered, but descends instead into a mismatched hodgepodge of little merit. There is so much to learn.





It is different plant combinations that make a garden zing for us.

To get them right, not only must plants be compatible in growth habits and growing conditions, but there is the complex issue of getting a succession of different plants to take the display through the whole season. We don't want a summer garden that looks brilliant for three weeks; we want it to look good for up to six months and OK for the remainder of the year. That is a whole different ball game.

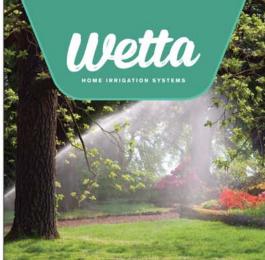
February will show me whether I'm on the right track with my most recent efforts last winter,

where I reworked a couple of areas of the garden. It must be the third or fourth time I have redone one particular area, so I am hoping I have it looking

better this time. I have gone for much more grouping – larger blocks each containing maybe three different bulbs and perennials to try and take each block through the year with something of interest. Pansies, nigella, white cosmos, linaria, alonsoa and polemoniums are allowed to seed down to break up any rigidity between the blocks of planting because I want a soft effect, not hard-edged designer style.

I am not going to show my reworked areas until I am happy with how they are looking.

So my photographs this month are all of combinations that caught our eye in English summer gardens. I would like parts of our garden to look a bit more like these and a little less green in February! 💠



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PETAL MUNCHING

Being a firm follower of permaculture where most things have a multiple function, I am growing an array of beautiful, colourful and bright flowers

he one major but very important consideration is that any flower I plant must be edible.

During the 16th century, England and Europe experienced an unprecedented interest in gardening and garden design. During this time the ladies of the wealthy estates became very knowledgeable about growing, using and conserving flowers in the home and for the kitchen.

We definitely don't own some wealthy estate and I am certainly no lady, but in our corner of Kiwi paradise we are doing the same thing this summer.

Growing edible flowers is nothing new but it is wonderful to enjoy a concoction of bright flower faces in the garden, knowing they will serve an end purpose. Over summer I have been growing these plants

in an assortment of containers and when I ran out of these, they have been planted in and around my vegetables.

I must admit, the garden looks very colourful with its mixture of pansies, cornflowers and sweet William.

I chose to grow them mainly in containers so I could keep them close at hand, near to the kitchen and patio where we do most of our entertaining and eating. This makes it much easier to see what is ready for picking and using and also brightens up the space. The flowers come on very quickly and it can be easy to forget about them or only find them once they have finished flowering, especially if they're hidden under large-leaved broccoli or kale in the vege garden.

When growing edible flowers it is important to know exactly what has NOT been sprayed on them!

Of course nasty chemical sprays do not get through our gate, but we do have dogs and three small boys who sometimes can't be bothered using the toilet, if you get my drift... Of course, looking at our healthy citrus trees, I do actually believe that saying that boys' pee is the best fertiliser for them may be true. So on that note, avoid planting any edible plants around telegraph poles, corners of buildings or anywhere else you think male dogs (and small man-children) may frequent. Also, if you've sprayed liquid fertiliser, wait for a week before harvesting your flowers.

I pick flowers just before I use them.

And if I can't do that I pick in the morning when their water content is highest. First, run them under cold water, then drop in ice water for a minute and dry them on a paper towel. Store them in a container in the fridge until they are required. Some flowers have a bitter-tasting base, which is best removed. If you are using flowers which have a large stamen with pollen, remove this with some small scissors.



I'm no Nigella, but here is a random list on how to add flowers to food:

- On crackers with cream cheese.
- To decorate a pavlova.
- In ice cubes and homemade ice blocks, or make floral ice bowls for cold desserts.
- Make lolly flowers for decorating cupcakes by covering blooms in granulated sugar and placing them in the hot sun.

This works especially well with borage flowers, pansies and violets.

- Add them to pizzas, frittatas and salads.
- Sprinkle dandelion petals over rice dishes.
- Stuff zucchini or nasturtium blossoms with fresh goat's cheese.

For more information on growing and using edible flowers, check out my website greenurbanliving.co.nz.











Some folk think I'm besotted with golden Japanese grass *Hakonechloa macra* `Aureola' — they're quite right

t looks classy with grey-blue hostas, subtle and unusual with plum colours of *Euphorbia dulcis* 'Chameleon' and vibrant with the burgundy foliage of the deciduous tree *Cercis* 'Forest Pansy', another all-summer delight, and with the red, tubular-flowered, dark-foliage fuchsias, such as 'Mary' and 'Gartenmeister Bonstedt'. In subtropical-style gardens it's fun with cannas, orange and red single-flowered dahlias and bananas.

It's particularly stunning combined with the bold chocolate-coloured foliage of *Ligularia* 'Britt Marie Crawford', which is also fun with Japanese weeping maples, and is great for creating contrast. The ligularia performs through summer providing it has a moist soil and doesn't get baked in all-day sun. Morning sun and afternoon shade are an ideal mix for keeping the foliage colour and avoiding the temporary collapse of the foliage due to excessive heat.

Lots of food is the clue with Ligularia 'Britt Marie Crawford'

My plants thrive on liberal applications of sheep manure. I use the straight-from-the-woolshed stuff, provided by a real Kiwi character who sells it door to door. He has the knack of arriving, in his latest \$300 car (the previous one having invariably broken down), just when I've run out of the precious stuff. Despite dire warnings, the unadulterated manure has never caused a problem with weeds.

Aeonium 'Schwarzkopf' is another chocolate-coloured foliage plant which is outstanding in summer.

But unlike the ligularia, it is untroubled by heaps of sunshine, happy in poor soils and doesn't mind long periods of drought. This long-stemmed succulent makes an intriguing contrast with all sorts of plants. I enjoy seeing it with dark red or orange geraniums and in my garden it grows with the wine-coloured leaves of *Cotinus* 'Grace' and a pretty orange and gold alstroemeria.

This plant is very easy to propagate. Just break off stems, leave in a shady spot for a few days so the cut surfaces can dry off, then poke them into soil or potting mix and away they go. A great plant for beach gardens, it is untroubled by sand and salt winds. A friend used to grow it on a sandbank beside a path in her Paekakariki garden, the effect of the tall stems topped with their rosettes of dark chocolate foliage towering overhead was always surprising.

At this time of year it's worthwhile evaluating hostas' staying power.

Some are magnificent in spring, then fade away as summer progresses; others continue on, looking great until late summer. I've been a fan of *Hosta* 'June' for a long time, enchanted by its elegant colourings, great habit and most of all the ability to keep on looking perfect month after month.

This year I've combined it with a pot of the dainty, yellow, flat-growing *Sedum*

'Ogon', which like the hosta is a shade lover. Nearby, there are lots of other hostas, one of the most intriguing of which is 'Blue Mouse Ears', a miniature variety with leaves so tightly bunched that the plants are like little mounds of foliage. It's popular for containers in northern hemisphere countries, but I reckon it's stunning as a little, massed foreground planting in a shady border or as a contrast to heucheras and heucherellas.

It's also a good time to assess the performance of the Acer palmatum varieties of Japanese maples.

'Bloodgood' is a taller variety, but I've found that growing it in a part of the garden where the soil is not particularly rich, and ensuring that it has room to spread rather than being forced up between other trees keeps it bushier. It grows near the deck and from spring to autumn the rich, dark red colour is always pleasing. Over the years the underplanting has changed a little as the maple has produced more summer shades. These days there are the golden Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola' grasses, reddish-maroon loropetalum off to the side where it reaches into the light, a background of Ligularia 'Britt Marie Crawford' where there's more sun, and at the front, receiving shade and shelter aplenty, are several Vriesea hieroglyphica bromeliads, their leaf colours uncannily like those of the golden grasses.

The bromeliads are in small pots, which suits them just fine, as they don't need much in the way of soil or potting mix to keep them happy, and it provides the opportunity to move them easily if I'm overtaken by a whim to try them somewhere else in a different season.





If you grow one berry in your garden, make it a blackcurrant. They need a bit of winter chill, but do very well here in the Nelson region and our winters aren't what I'd call harsh

lackcurrant bushes can live for up to 50 years and produce around 3kg of fruit each. They don't take up much room, needing an area of roughly 1m² and they don't grow much taller than 1m, so are easy to net for birds and to pick.

Plus pruning them is a doddle.

In winter, go through and thin out older and dead canes at ground level to make room for new canes and keep the vigour up. It is easy to spot the difference between the old and new growth - see my photo on the opposite page. They like rich, well-drained soil, but do well for me on clay with mulch and compost. They don't like as much of an acidic soil as other berries and they don't like to dry out. The bushes flower in October - be aware, a late frost can damage the blossoms - and fruit ripens in December and January. It freezes very well, so you can use them all year. I like to throw them into tarts, smoothies and salads and make purees to serve with desserts and red meats. (I also make crème de cassis liqueur with berries, vodka and red wine.)



People have known about the blackcurrant's medicinal qualities for centuries. Now science is catching up, confirming they have high levels of vitamins C, B6 and E, antioxidants and omega 3. It's not just the fruit that can be eaten; the leaves can be used to preserve vegetables and make a tea that is not unlike green tea.

Red and white currants are less common, but just as easy to grow.

Like blackcurrants, these bushes will, if well pruned, yield about 3kg of fruit a year. They also only grow to around 1m, so are easy to net for birds, and they are relatively pest- and disease-free. They ripen the same time as blackcurrants too. You do prune them differently, however. They fruit on two- to three-year-old wood, so you need to give them a haircut every now and then to encourage some new wood, but ensure there is plenty of old wood left for fruiting. So instead of removing old canes, just prune them back periodically. White currants are simply an albino form of the red currant. The fruit is a little sweeter and very delicate in flavour. It's of lower acidity too, so nicer to eat fresh.

The king of blackcurrant varieties is the prolific, vigorous-growing

'Magnus'. There's also heavy-cropping 'Ben Mapua', which fruits two weeks after 'Magnus', and 'Tai Tahi', which is a little earlier. Or there's 'Sefton', which requires less chilling than other blackcurrants, and will grow anywhere you grow raspberries. There are two red currant varieties in New Zealand: 'Gloria de Versailles' and 'Myra McKee'. White currants are usually just sold as 'White'.

COOKING WITH CURRANTS

Some people are put off growing currants because of the tedious business of topping and tailing. I say this isn't necessary. Cook them all up together and sieve to remove the stalk and tuft, but I guarantee you won't notice it even if you don't sieve them. Most of my recipes come from *The Mighty Blackcurrant Recipe Book*, published by the Sarau blackcurrant festival in Nelson as a fundraiser. It is out of print now, but if you want one, contact them. If they get enough takers they may well do another print run.

Blackcurrant syrup

Gently cook 1.5kg blackcurrants with 600ml of water until soft and squeeze through cotton muslin. Then add 500g sugar to every 600mls of juice and simmer for 10 minutes. Allow it to cool, pour it into sterilised bottles and seal (add citric acid as a preservative first if you're storing it out of the fridge). Diluted with soda water, it makes a refreshing cordial; with hot water it makes an excellent tonic if you are suffering from a cold.

Blackcurrant and rhubarb jam

Boil 2kg blackcurrants and 1kg rhubarb in 2L of water for 30 minutes, mashing the fruit up as you go. Stir in 2.5kg of sugar and boil for 15 minutes or until the jam sets on a saucer. Pour into clean, dry jars, warmed in the oven on a low heat, and seal.

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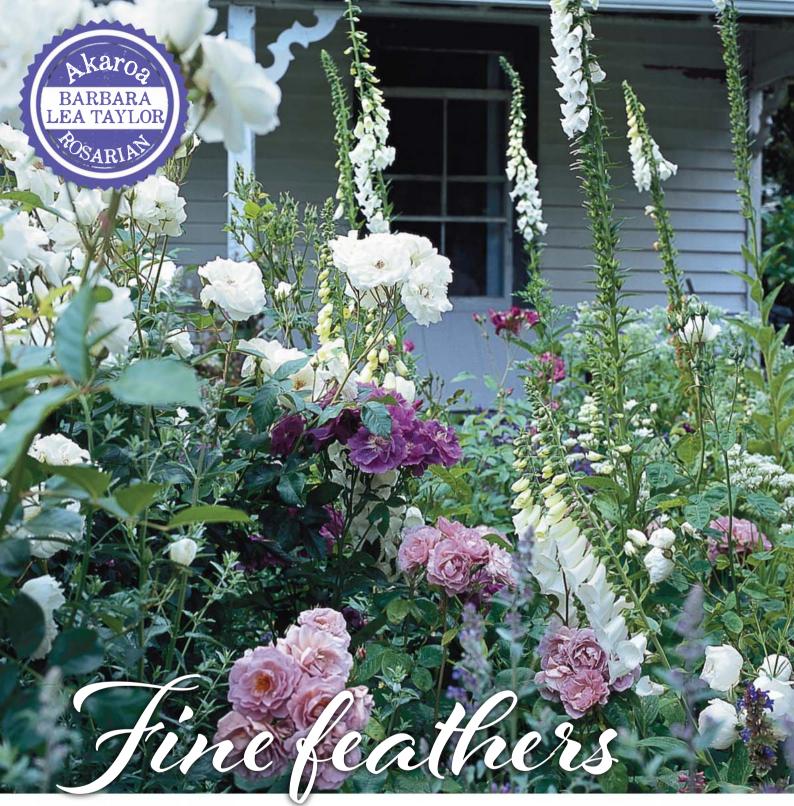
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I'm grieving this month for a blackbird. I know, they are 10 a penny (or four and twenty in a pie) and cause havoc scratching out plants

ut this one was far too tame and came swooshing onto my verandah each morning like a witch on a broomstick. I would whistle a special whistle and she would whistle it back.

She was ugly for a blackbird – a dirty brown with a drooping wing – and she was a complete harridan to other birds, particularly her mate who was glossy black, but thin and jumpy like a henpecked husband (he was never allowed

so much as a peck of an apple). Late one afternoon I noticed she was sitting on the spot where I fed her in the mornings, with her feathers all fluffed up and her head drooping. I went as near to her as I dared and she didn't move. Roscoe, the cat, was wearing his innocent face, and the bird didn't seem to have been mauled. I couldn't pick her up because I can't touch feathers – I know it's foolish but I just can't.

I agonized for a while, then called a friend, who arrived with a box lined with scrumpled, tissue paper.

He picked her up, felt her all over and said she didn't appear to be wounded but perhaps she was poisoned. There wasn't much we could do, so he took her home and phoned me later to say she had lasted about an hour. Only a bird, of course, and I will shout at them when they eat the grapes, but I wish I could have saved her and wonder what killed her.

If your roses are anything like mine, the foliage will be a bit shabby now,

but the repeat-flowering bushes will be bursting into bloom again, which has to be a good thing. Prune once-flowering varieties as soon as they've finished flowering because they flower primarily on mature canes.

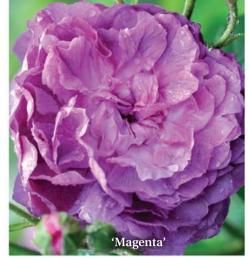
"The answer lies in the soil" should be tattooed on to every gardener.

My friend, Kirsty, grows better roses than mine, and she swears she never feeds them. I think it's because she gardens on a relatively small, fertile patch of soil that has remained undisturbed for years while my roses grow on the clapped out remains of soil that never knows whether it's coming or going. That's my excuse, but whatever we do for our roses is not nearly as important as the soil they grow in. No chemical fertilisers can compensate for soil rich in organic matter. Compost is vital, whether we do it beautifully in bins or haphazardly in heaps, use animal manures or use the animals themselves.

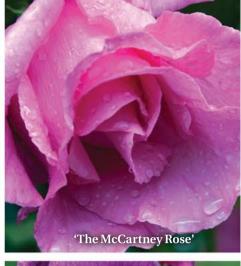
When my cat brings me a rat, it promptly goes under a rose. Possums are better, but every little bit helps. I was lucky this year and found a source of "under the woolshed" sheep manure which is old enough to be reasonably weed-free and is soul food for plants. Mushroom compost is good too and my roses get a trailer load every second or third year.

'Magenta' is a favourite rose for me.

In Kirsty's garden it is a spreading bush full of big luscious "off-colour" flowers that open dusky rose and quickly turn to slate-lavender with a touch of milky coffee. Like most off-colour roses, it is richly perfumed. It's classed as a modern Hybrid Tea but was introduced 60 years ago by the great German nursery, Kordes.









'Midnight Rambler' twines around Kirsty's fence and is the answer for all who pine for a purple Climber.

It's classed as a Patio Climber but it makes a sizeable shrub and is capable of climbing 2-3m, or perhaps more. Semi-double flowers are not huge, but they are deepest, darkest true purple and are produced in flushes throughout the season. It's a rose with grace and charm, and lovely in a vase. A few bushes rambling along a front fence would be much admired. There are a few true purple old roses but very few new hybrids of this shade. I know several rose breeders who are trying to breed one.

If you like 'Midnight Rambler', you will love 'Gipsy Boy', a romantic old Bourbon rose bred in Hungary.

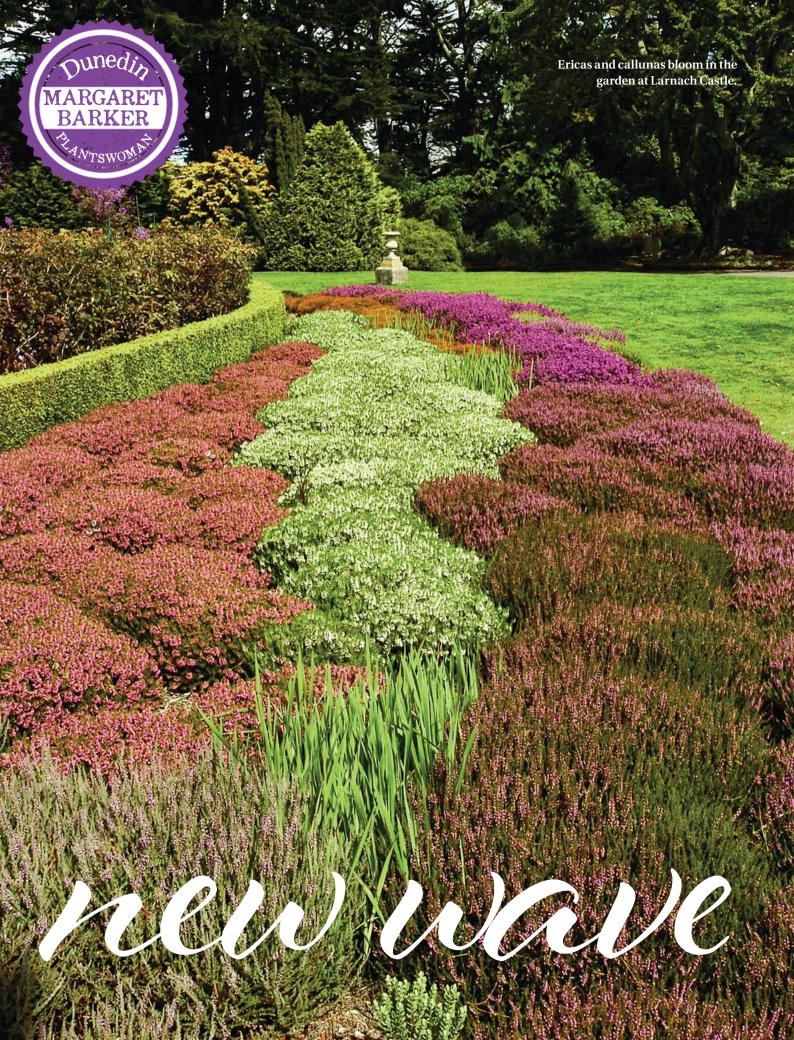
Violet-purple blooms are many-petalled and open flat to show golden stamens. This rose is easy to grow and flowers once in summer. Its foliage is attractively wrinkled and its canes are thorny. If you don't pick all the flowers you get orangered hips in autumn. It is a vigorous grower with an arching habit and would make a dashing boundary hedge.

'Summer Wine' cascades over boundary fences in Kirsty's garden.

Coral pink and yellow aren't her favourite colours, or mine, but this rose is so deliciously fragrant she can't help loving it. Wavy petals of coral pink with yellow at the base and long red stamens create an instantly recognizable climbing rose that makes you smile. Growth is vigorous, it repeat blooms through spring and summer and would be a delight on arches and pergolas.

'The McCartney Rose', named for Paul and his late wife, Linda, is nothing if not sensational.

Introduced in France in 1992, this rose has won gold medals all over the world. Think of a Hybrid Tea with iridescent, shocking pink blooms that seem to spiral out of a tight bud, with the petals opening like a large and exquisite shell. It's fragrant as well as beautiful and repeats in flushes throughout the season and the bush is large and upright. Kirsty grows it beside lime-green euphorbias, a smart combination in the garden, and in a vase.



Heathers and their erica cousins are thought unfashionable, redolent of the 1970s like little conifers, bell bottom trousers and sideburns — think again

o, they're not naff! Heathers are low-maintenance plants with tremendous potential for the designer garden. "They're illegal, like party drugs," detractors say. But like party drugs, only some of the heathers are on the banned weed list – they're the single callunas. Double callunas are OK, as are all of the ericas.

Let's list their good points, starting with them being easy care.

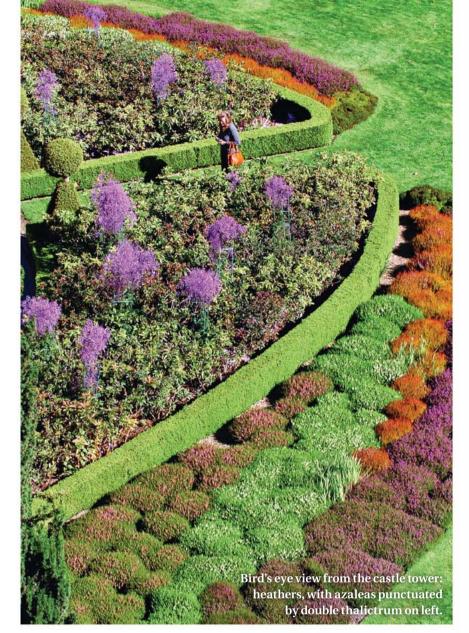
All the upkeep that heaths and heathers require is a clip over once a year. When the plants grow together they form a carpet. Few weeds make it through this dense foliage cover. This annual clip is a lot less work than mowing a lawn weekly.

They have flower power – for every month of the year there is a heath or heather that will be in flower.

Particularly valued here in the south is *Erica melanthera*, which is smothered in flowers from late autumn and right through winter. The one to get is *Erica melanthera* 'Improved'. There is also a white form. This South African treasure has shrubby growth to 80cm. Later in winter, *Erica* x *darleyensis* varieties flower in shades of pink, heliotrope, pale lilac or pure white right through into spring.

Colourful, weather-proof blooms are especially appreciated during the southern winter. Late summer and autumn splendour is yet to come, and early summer flowers are becoming tired. At Larnach Castle the heather garden bursts into bloom with purples, pinks and crisp white, refreshing the garden display.

Heather flowers age gracefully, firstly to the muted shades of an ancient tapestry, then to russets and browns. We leave the flower heads on the plants. They are attractive through winter. Plants get their clip over just before spring.



Heathers have fabulous foliage in shades of green, grey and gold.

Plus, it's finely textured and matte. It's attractive in an understated way and can be used to offset large or glossy-leafed plants, or simply add textural interest to lawns or borders. At Larnach Castle's heather garden, head gardener Fiona Eadie clips the greens and the greys, leaving the deep gold foliage to run through the garden like a flickering flame.

They always look good – heather plants don't do bad hair days.

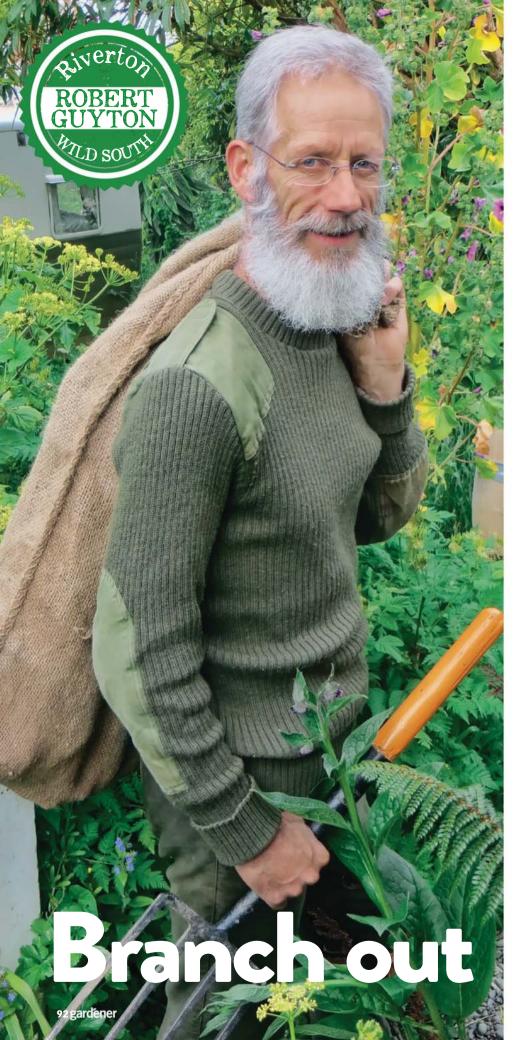
If clipped annually, heather plants are neat and evergreen. Flowers are a bonus: never garish, and subtle in their demise.

They're a designer's delight.

Heathers dotted in the border is so yesterday. Plant them in bold blocks of colour and texture. Create swirling patterns, in the way that the Brazilian garden designer Burle Marx used tropical plants, or plant them in geometric blocks in the same way that grasses are planted in the most modern designer gardens in England and France. I've seen heather plants of different foliage colours used to create interweaving patterns in a knot garden, and Sir Roy Strong, when his box plants finally succumbed to disease, replaced the box hedges with clipped heather in his garden The Laskett.

Ericas need a well-drained, acid soil that doesn't dry out.

When preparing the beds for planting at Larnach Castle, we incorporated homemade compost into the soil and then mulched with pine needles that we collected from under the shelter belts. Our plants have never been fertilised or irrigated.



The leafy lake of green that is my garden long ago overflowed its banks and flowed out into the surrounding neighbourhood

eeds and cuttings, divisions and transplants have made their way to far-flung corners of the town and have settled to grow satellites of the "mother garden" that look similar to the parent, but not the same, as is the way with any garden. I can visit the garden behind the fire station and be among familiar plants: wild chervil, heritage apples, fennel, marshmallow and alexanders that began here at home, but have left the fold and gone out into the world.

Just last week I added a brace of grafted apple trees, knee-high and already in blossom, to a cluster of native trees I planted beside the main road two decades ago, when I first began to toy with the idea that there was public space – common ground out there – that was in need of planting.

As a younger man, all sinewy and keen and not yet familiar with the mechanisms of council, I nervously dug the reserve land soils at dusk or dawn, when there were far fewer cars passing by, believing that I might be chastised for helping myself to space that everyone shared and no one used, but I never was and now I'm fearless, shouldering trees and a spade and striding out at midday to plant.

My enemy is "The Spray Guy".

He doesn't know, I believe, that I've fruit trees planted alongside much of the road he's contracted to keep clear of weeds and grasses, or that he's killed a number of them as he goes about his herbicidal business, but I adapt to his regime and plant out of his reach whenever I discover that he's wiped out patches of my "long orchard". Apricots are the most susceptible, followed by peaches.

Apples seem the most resistant, hence, I suppose, their dominance in Southland as the roadside fruit tree.

I've gone off-road recently, lugging my sacks of sapling apple trees down the trout fishermen's track.

They'll need fruit, I predict, some hot summer's day when the fish have been particularly reluctant to bite and their supply of sandwiches has run out, so I'm getting the trees in now. They'll not get sprayed, I'm gambling, because the area they've been planted into is tangled scrub all woven about with blackberry.

Crimson clover flowers arrest the attention of all my garden visitors.

They're as red as anything you'll ever see I'm told (my colour vision lets me down when it comes to red and green and crimson). This annual clover is easy to grow and the seed is not expensive when bought in bulk. Being an annual, it needs to be sown in time for the plants to spring out of the soil as soon as it's warm so that it can flower throughout the summer period. If left to its own devices, it will re-seed and flower again the following spring. It lasts a very long time in a vase and the blooms keep their colour very well.

A little fussing over your tomatoes this month will improve their health at a time when they're vulnerable.

Nip off laterals, which serve no purpose at this stage and will divert and waste the plant's energy. Pluck yellowed and wizened leaves as well and open the plant up to the light and air to prevent fungi, which likes dark, moist places.

Get stuck into your raspberries.

Cut their canes back as far as you dare, or have been advised, and take them away for burning. Hollow canes on any plant will provide safe harbour for insects that like to feed on the plant they're hosted by, so consigning them to the fire, though harsh and heartless, will protect your remaining raspberry plants from any unwelcome attentions. The ash from that fire will be appreciated by anything that's presently fruiting, so will not be wasted.

When pruning raspberry canes back, start by taking out the withered and misshapen, the ill looking and inconvenient. Once you've done that, the job will be half finished. Raspberry varieties differ from one another in how they behave, so learn how yours perform and when and how to prune them to best effect.



Get swinging on your Dutch hoe.

Use it with finesse and discretion, but employ it energetically, as the summer season favours weeds and they will prevail if you don't. The beauty of the hoe from The Netherlands is that it performs its duty with the minimum of disruption – that is, it doesn't stir up other weed seeds, exposing them to the conditions that they love and causing them to sprout, grow and dominate the garden scene. Work your hoe just below the surface of the soil and aim to minimise soil disturbance. The more intact your soil stays, the fewer weeds will appear in the wake of your work.

Thin your beets. Do the same with your carrots and turnips too.

It's fiddly work but always worthwhile. If you want roots that you can boast about, early attention to thinning is vital. There's only so much space below ground and if it's taken already by another adventurous root, none will reach boasting size. If the thinnings are big enough, eat them – they'll be fresh and delicious if my boyhood memories are anything to go by. I was always a helpful carrot thinner when my dad needed one.

The secret to success with leeks is to apply liquid whenever you can,

be that fresh water, preferably recently fallen from the sky, or a pale tea brewed from something nutritious like comfrey or kelp. Leeks love fluids and February is a month in which care needs to be taken that there are sufficient drink breaks provided to everything that feels the thirst.

HOZELOCK Gardening for life

Watering couldn't be easier with a Hozelock Auto Reel



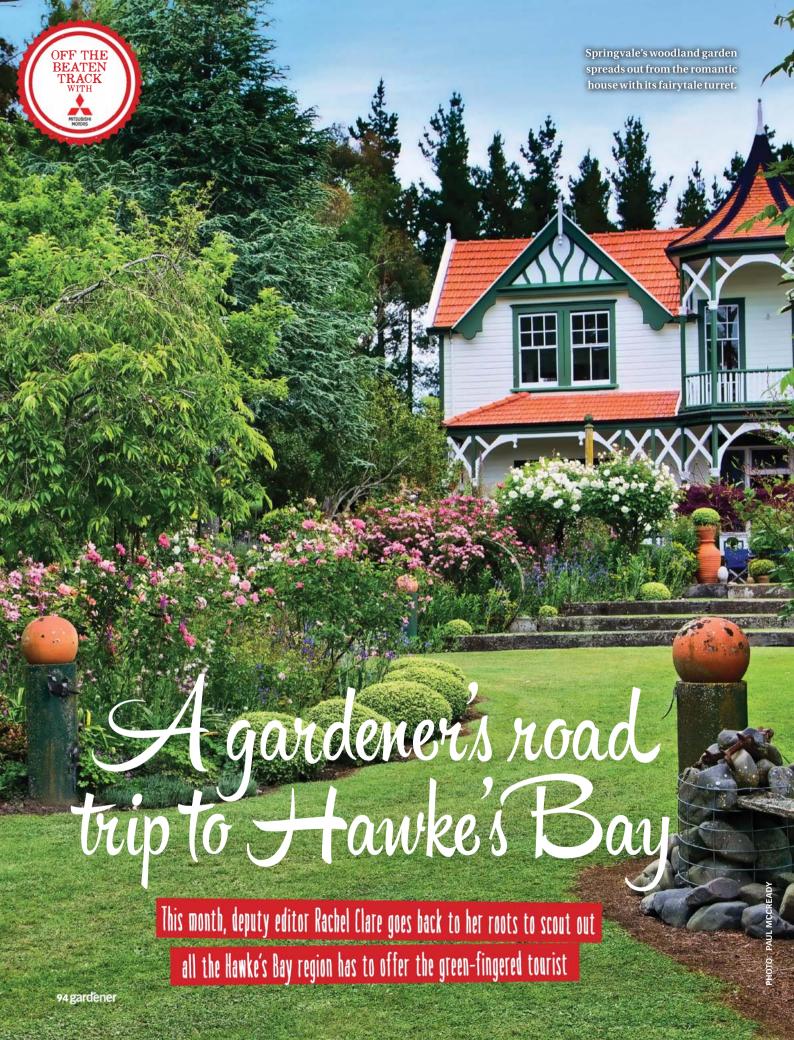
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awke's Bay isn't called the fruit bowl of New Zealand for nothing. Fertile plains and long sunshine hours have made this one of the country's most productive growing regions. More than half of New Zealand's apples and 40 per cent of our stone fruit are grown here, along with grapes, figs, avocados and olives. The roads between the main centres of Napier, Hastings and Havelock North take you past fields of orchards and vineyards – it's also the second-largest wine region – many with roadside shops where you can stock up on produce so you won't go hungry. Plus there are also plenty of non-consumable horticultural encounters for the vacationing gardener.

1 STAND UNDER 155-YEAR-OLD TREES AT GWAVAS GARDEN HOMESTEAD

One of the largest privately owned collections of temperate woody plants in Australasia, Gwavas Garden was given a Distinguished with Merit award by the International Dendrology Society in 2009. Best described as a Cornish woodland garden, it was based on the original home in England of its first owner, Major George Gwavas Carlyon. Five generations on, this NZ Gardens Trust Garden of Significance is managed by his descendant, Phyllida Gibson. Highlights include Himalayan lilies, a cork oak that was planted in 1894 and raspberry plants that have been producing fruit for more than 100 years. You can also stay the night in the historic homestead, which is said to have some of the best totara panelling in the country. Gwavas is open by appointment and as part of the Tikokino Districts Garden Tour in the third weekend of November every year. Entry is \$8, children are free. Visit gwavasgarden.co.nz for more details.

2 TAKE A TOUR OF WELEDA'S BIODYNAMIC GARDENS

Weleda's health and beauty products are grown and produced in more than 50 countries. See fields of lavender, calendula and echinacea at its Havelock North farm, then stock up on cosmetics and medicines at the shop. Tours are free by appointment. Phone 0800 802 174.



Many of Hawke's Bay's wineries take advantage of the area's shallow soil.

Known as "Havelock clay pan", it is perfect for Bordeaux varieties.





Clockwise from above: Black Barn Bistro is open for lunch Wednesday to Sunday and dinner on Friday evenings; A labyrinth of liriope at Trelinnoe Park; Weleda's Havelock North farm grows calendula for their Mother and Baby range of natural organic skincare.

3 SEE 20,000 PLANTS AND TREES AT TRELINNOE PARK GARDEN

Sheer hard work created this 12-hectare garden surrounded by farmland on the Napier-Taupo road. A woodland garden with a diverse range of trees, shrubs, perennials and natives, it has been designed so that you can see something in flower every day of the year. Highlights include a tree-sized hydrangea, a thicket of deciduous Himalayan shrub Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana and its collection of magnolias, which is thought to be one of the largest in the country. Just 30 minutes from Napier, Trelinnoe is open 365 days of the year. Entry is \$10 for adults and children are free. Phone 06 834 9704 for more information.

4 DINE BENEATH THE VINES AT BLACK BARN VINEYARDS

Sample their award-winning wines at the cellar door or in the bistro (it was *Cuisine's* winery restaurant of the year in 2011). Black Barn also offers 16 luxury retreats and every Saturday during summer it hosts its Growers' Market where you can buy fresh produce, bread, coffee and flowers. See blackbarn.com.

5 PICK A HOST OF GOLDEN DAFFS AT TANIWHA DAFFODILS IN SPRING

A bunch of 30 is \$4 and proceeds go to Plunket. Open through September, weather-dependent. On State Highway 2, just 10 minutes south of Waipukurau. Visit taniwhadaffodils.co.nz for details.









Clockwise from top left: Florist Kerrin Greville at Hawke's Bay Farmers' Market; Me and Billy at Rush Munro's Ice Cream Garden in Hastings – they've been making fresh fruit ice creams since 1926; Round Pond Garden in Hastings; Another sugar rush for the kids at Birdwood Gallery's sweet shop – it's like something out of an Enid Blyton story; Paeonies at Oruawharo; 'Paul Ricault' and love-in-a -mist in Georgina Campbell's garden.





6 VISIT THE HAWKE'S BAY FARMERS' MARKET IN NAPIER OR HASTINGS

Figs, chillies, damson plum paste, organic seedlings, cider and cupcakes are just some of the offerings at this grower's market. Make sure you try the walnut brittle from Maud & Harry's Walnut Company. Held on Saturdays in Lower Emerson Street, Napier from 9-1 and on Sundays at the Hastings A&P Showgrounds from 8:30-12:30, where you can sit under trees and listen to live music.

7 GO UP THE DRIVEWAY OF PIN OAKS TO FIND AWATEA COUNTRY GARDEN

Shirley Limbrick started developing this densely planted garden in 1960. There's a formal parterre garden, lots of lilies, and gorgeous roses. Look out for the adorable "tractor" Shirley made out of a steel drum for her granddaughter. It's open by appointment from October to March and as part of the Tikokino Districts Garden Tour. Entry is \$5 for adults and children are free. Phone 06 856 5879.

8 MAKE A SPECIAL TRIP TO SEE THE WILDFLOWERS AT ROUND POND

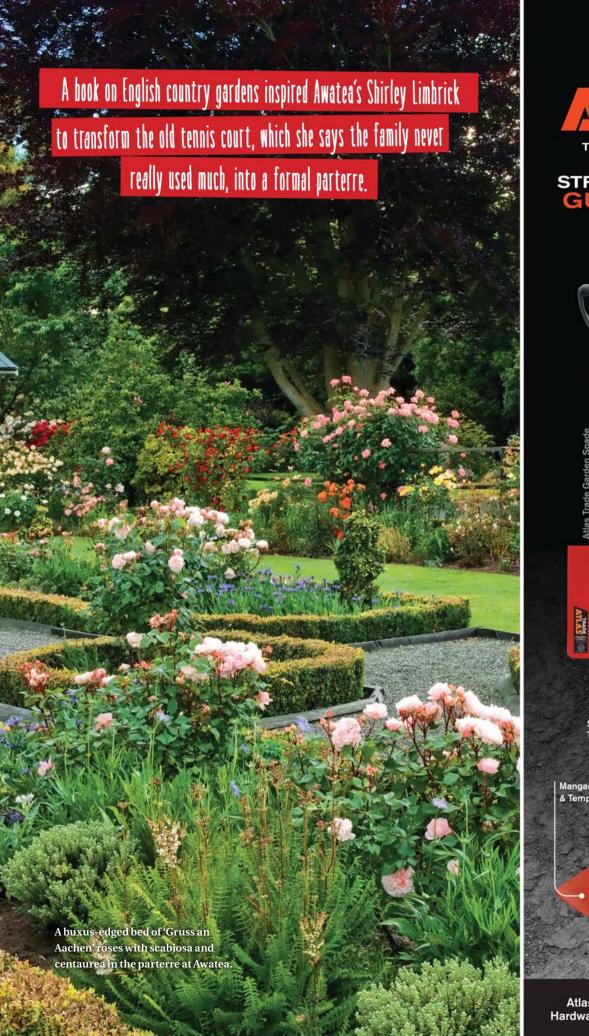
Every two years Round Pond Garden opens for its Wildflower Sculpture Exhibition. Tour the stunning garden, view sculptures by local artists and help raise money for the Cranford Hospice. The next exhibition is in November 2016. Visit wildflowersculptureexhibition.co.nz for more information.

9 TAKE HIGH TEA AT ORUAWHARO, THEN STROLL THE GROUNDS

Peter and Dianne Harris have restored 17 hectares of gardens, parklands, trees and fields around their 135-year-old homestead, 45 minutes' drive from Hasting, plus they've recently planted a truffiere of 600 oak trees. For more information, visit oruawharo.com.

10 BUY GARDEN ART (PLUS A FEW SWEETS) AT BIRDWOOD GALLERY

Owner Louise Stobart's sculptures made from recycled oil drums have been exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show and Keukenhof Tulip Gardens. A range of local and African sculpture is for sale, and there's a cafe and a sculpture garden. Pop next door to the old-fashioned sweet shop and buy yourself some gumdrops.





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Clockwise from top: Te Mata figs; Me, taste testing, at The Strawberry Patch, on Havelock Road; Beekeepers at Arataki Honey; Gwavas Garden; Kennedy Park Rose Gardens.



11 GET FIGGY AT TE MATA FIGS

Go on a tour of the figgery, then sample and buy some of the artisan fig products, including fig relish, Spanish fig cake and the special salame di fichi (fig and walnut roll). From mid-February to mid-May you can sample 23 different varieties of fresh figs. They also have plants for sale, including espaliered fig trees. Open Monday to Saturday from 10am-4pm, or visit them at the Hawke's Bay Farmer's Market in Hastings on Sundays. Visit tematafigs.co.nz.

Grab a bucket and pick your own strawberries at The Strawberry Patch in

Havelock North. They also sell strawberry ice creams and smoothies.





12 LEARN ABOUT HERITAGE ROSES AT CHEOPS GARDEN, HASTINGS

Owner Georgina Campbell is the convenor of the Heritage Rose Society and grows more than 1000 varieties of both heritage and modern roses, including McGredy roses. She also offers informal workshops. To arrange a visit, email georgec@xnet.co.nz.

13 FILL UP YOUR BOOT WITH PLANTS AT GREEN DOOR GARDEN & GIFTS

Just across the road from The Strawberry Patch (pictured) is one of the best garden centres in the Bay. Owner Gillian Thrum has a wide selection of plants for sale, including an impressive range of roses and gorgeous hanging baskets, plus there's a fabulous gift shop. It's at 93 Havelock Road, Havelock North.

14 STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES AT KENNEDY PARK ROSE GARDENS

These gardens were opened in 1951 and are home to more than 500 different varieties of roses. Just 10 minutes' drive from the centre of Napier, parking is on Russell Road and entry is free.

15 SWOON AT ROMANTIC SPRINGVALE IN TIKOKINO

A rambling country garden of roses, golf-ball pittosporums, agapanthus and specimen trees. Open from October to the end of November by appointment and as part of the annual Tikokino Garden Tour. Phone 06 856 5503.





16 SEE THE CASCADING WATERFALL AT CENTENNIAL GARDENS

These gardens with their bright flower beds, at the bottom of Coote Road just off Napier's Marine Parade, were once a quarry mined by prisoners. (The old prison across the road is now a backpackers and is said to be haunted!)

17 ESCAPE FOR A NIGHT TO ST ANDREW'S ESCAPE!

This boutique lodge near Hastings and Havelock North is surrounded by 1.2 hectares of native and exotic plantings, and fruit from its orchard is on the menu daily. Visit standrewsescape.co.nz.

18 BUZZ OUT AT THE ARATAKI HONEY VISITORS CENTRE

Sample the different honeys, observe the bees and even dress up as an apiarist. Entry is free. See aratakihoneyhb.co.nz for more information. Mitsubishi adopted jet fighter-inspired styling when they developed the ASX. You can see it in the front grille and headlights as we fly down Hasting's Oak Avenue, planted in the 1860s.

19 BUY ORGANIC SEEDLINGS, TAHINI AND CIDER VINEGAR

One of the country's oldest health food stores, Chantal Organic Wholefoods was established by a group of Hawke's Bay families dedicated to principles of sustainability in 1978. Their products range from natural cosmetics to fresh produce, grains and seeds and organic seedlings, plus there's a vegetarian cafe. Open daily at 45 Hastings Street, Napier.

20 BOARD THE APPLE WAGON AND TOUR A 100-YEAR-OLD ORCHARD

A massive 33 hectares of apples, stone fruit and pears grow on this multigeneration family orchard. You can also feed the farm animals and there's a licensed cafe. Visit pernel.nzliving.co.nz.

ON THE FRUIT TRAIL

A road trip around sunny Hawke's Bay provides a smorgasbord of coastal roads, hilly climbs and long stretches of road across alluvial plains covered in orchards and vineyards. This was no sweat in Mitsubishi's 2WD ASX XLS, which we were trialling. With its hatchback-like dimensions, it's easy to see why this SUV was named NZ Autocar's Crossover of the Year in 2010. Driving down from Auckland on a Friday night with my partner and kids, it was a smooth ride as we crawled through rush-hour traffic – plus the kids enjoyed being elevated, which was a blessing when we were in gridlock traffic outside Rainbow's End for 20 minutes – but easily got up to highway speeds once we were out on the open road. This is aided by the CVT transmission, which uses a belt instead of cogs, so you don't even feel the gears change as you accelerate. It's also efficient, using only 7.4L of petrol per 100km. We felt very safe travelling over the steep ranges between Taupo and Napier in the dark (often harrowing and usually involving some shouting at the male driver!) due to the ASX's electronic brake force distribution, which adjusts the brake force at each wheel, and the active stability control, which maintains a safe line through the corner if traction is lost. The 5-star ANCAP safety rating makes this a great family car. There are seven airbags in total - driver, passenger, side, curtain and driver's knee airbag - plus the reversing camera provides added reassurance when there are small people around and also doubles as a nifty 6.1-inch touch screen for the audio controls. It's also easy to manoeuvre out of tight parking spots, boasting the sharpest turning circle in its class. Rachel Clare





THIS YEAR'S WINNERS

SECOND PLACE-Paul Robinson

Paul is an assistant viticulturist for Villa Maria's vineyards in the Hawkes Bay. Paul's prizes included a \$5,500 Massey University study scholarship, \$750 Everris Specialty Products, a horticulture magazine subscription.

THIRD PLACE-Nicolas Muir

Nic is a site foreman for Artwork Landscapes Ltd in Christchurch. Nic's prizes included \$1,000 cash, \$500 Everris Specialty Products, horticulture magazine subscription.

T&G PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES AWARD. for the best overall practical activities score during the Grand Final:

Nicolas Muir

FRUITFED SUPPLIES LEADERSHIP AWARD: **Patrick Malley**

PRIMARY ITO CAREER DEVELOPMENT AWARD: Patrick Malley

BAYER BEST PRACTICE AWARD with a focus on sustainability and crop management practices: Sarah Fenwick

BEST SPEECH. supported by NZ Winegrowers and Countdown:

Caitlin Thorburn

YOUNG HORTICULTURIST OF THE YEAR 2014







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SARAH FENWICK

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Gardening odds & sods

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[NEW PLANTS]



COLOURFUL ONIONS

This Franchi mixture of red, white and golden onions ensures an extended harvesting season and long usage period. Bulbs are mid to early, all large and ideal for cooking. Seeds available from Italian Seeds Pronto.



CICORIA 'PALLA ROSSA PRECOCE',

aka 'Early Red Ball' chicory, is easy to grow, with tender and crunchy heads. Its red heads are tightly wrapped and have prominent white veins. Available from Italian Seeds Pronto.



SEDUM 'DESERT BLACK'

is valued for its dark foliage and rose-pink flowers. Compact in size (25cm high x 30cm wide), it has vigorous basal branching, and good garden performance. From the Living Fashion range available from garden centres.



SEDUM 'DESERT RED'

has deep rose-pink flowers in late summer which mature into shiny red seed heads in autumn. Its blue-green leaves are flat, with a spreading habit, darkening with sun exposure. From the Living Fashion range at garden centres.



ALTERNANTHERA 'LITTLE RUBY'

has deep burgundy foliage with a glowing ruby red underside. A compact groundcover, it grows in full sun to part shade and is tolerant of heat and humidity. From Gardening Solutionz at garden centres.



BAUHINIA GALPINII

the red orchid tree from South Africa, is a hardy, deciduous shrub with a semiprostrate form that can be trained as a low bush, a small cascading tree or as a vine on a trellis. From Russell Fransham Subtropicals.



IRESINE 'NEON PINK'

is a showstopper with its pink leaves with vivid neon-pink ribs. A compact form with fine leaves, it's ideal for pots and garden borders. From the Gardening Solutionz range available from garden centres.



SIGNIFICANT STARS

Elite-status recognition for Ohinetahi and Trotts Garden

Two Canterbury properties have been upgraded to gardens of international significance or six stars by the New Zealand Gardens Trust. Ohinetahi (pictured above, and featured in *NZ Gardener* June 2014) and Trotts Garden join Larnach Castle, Ayrlies, Te Kainga Marire and Dunedin Botanic Gardens as New Zealand's best-of-the-best.

Established in 2004, the NZ Gardens Trust has set up an assessment process to provide visitors with information to gauge garden standards. To reach six stars, the gardens must achieve and maintain the highest levels of presentation, design and plant interest throughout the year to inspire garden lovers and deliver an experience above all other gardens.

Some 115 gardens, public and private, large and small, rated from three to six stars, are listed at gardens.org.nz. Gardens are arranged by region for ease of planning a garden-visiting itinerary.

GIVEAWAYS



TUI PLANT PROTECTION PACKS

Combat unwanted insect pests and diseases in your vege garden with Tui's Plant Protection range of Single Shot concentrates. Each pack makes 5L – the perfect amount for one application. Tui has six plant protection packs to give away. Visit tuiproducts.co.nz to find out more.



RED ANTHURIUM 'DAKOTA'

We have 10 plants worth \$39.95 each from Gellerts Nursery to give away. Gift wrapped and displayed in a stunning ceramic pot they are perfect gifts for Valentine's Day.

For your local stockists visit www.gellerts.co.nz

COMPETITION ENTRY DETAILS Write your contact details and choice of prize on the back of an envelope and mail to Garden Giveaways, *NZ Gardener*, PO Box 6341, Wellesley St, Auckland 1141. Or enter online by visiting nzgardener.co.nz. Entries open February 2 and close March 1, 2015.

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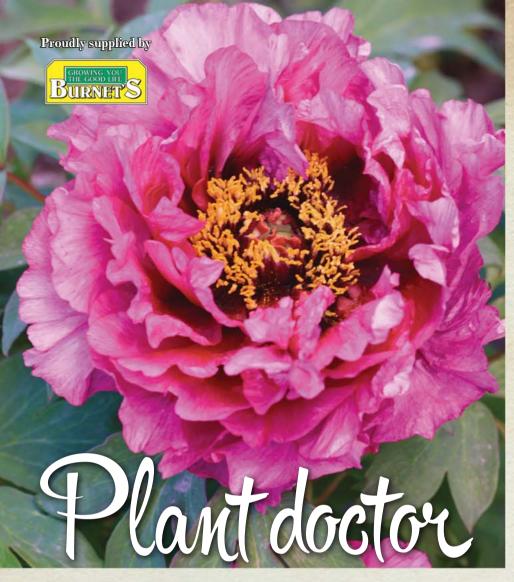


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PAEONY ADVICE I am thrilled to have two beautiful paeonies that I inherited from the previous owners of my garden. It has taken several years for them to flourish. How should I care for them and when should I divide them? KATHY SIMPSON, PALMERSTON NORTH

Paul and Esther Simmons from Canterbury nursery Simmons Paeonies say paeonies are surprisingly hardy and easy care. They thrive in frosty cold, in fact require some cold to flower successfully. They are also drought tolerant. Given a little care, most paeonies will grow happily in the same spot for many years. If a paeony is planted in the right place (sunny and relatively free of tree competition) it shouldn't need lifting and it will live for a very long time.

The only reason to divide a paeony is to propagate it or when moving it. The best time to lift and replant a paeony is from April to May so that it has time to regrow the fine feeder roots before the top sprouts

up in spring. If the root system is large it is best to divide it into several pieces, making sure that each piece has some central crown with buds on it as well as some storage root. Several varieties can sprout from any piece of root ('Coral Sunset', 'Coral Charm' and 'Christmas Velvet'). Most varieties, however, require a piece of budded crown to resprout.

If you have to move a paeony at the wrong time of year, lift the root, divide and replant as you would in autumn but cut down the green stems to ground level. It may resprout, but often it can just sit it out as a dormant root system and then resprout the following spring.

When replanting, plant it so that the base of the uppermost bud (or where the uppermost stem attaches to the root) is 4cm below the soil surface.

Remember that if you lift a paeony it may take three years to recover its former size.

More detailed planting, growing and care instructions are at peony.net.nz. Barbara Smith



BUGID I was wondering if one of your experts could tell me what this strange bug is that I found on my liquidambar tree? As you can see, it was quite large. Unfortunately I tried to pick it off and it flicked into the grass and I couldn't find it so I can't tell you what it was like underneath.. MAGGIE DUFF, KIMBOLTON

We checked with Ruud Kleinpaste who confirmed that it is not a "bug" as such, but an insect's egg case.

"It has been crafted, with great precision and some science, by a female praying mantis - the New Zealand native species Orthodera novaezealandiae," Ruud says.

"Last autumn she literally frothed out her eggs and when the soft casing hardened it took the shape of a mini Ayers Rock (Uluru). The nymphs (young mantids) have already hatched from the tops of their eggs and with a bit of luck they are now well on their way to becoming adult mantids.

"The nymphs are often very fastmoving insects and can leap impressive distances. These mantids are general predators of other invertebrates, capturing anything that moves of the right size and within reach."

The native mantids are under threat from accidentally introduced South African or Springbok mantids. The home-team mantids always have blue spots on the inner forelegs. There's lots of information about how you can help save our native praying mantis online, including images identifying which mantis is which.

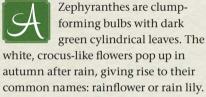
Barbara Smith

GARDENING ODDS & SODS FEBRUAR





RAIN LILIES I live in Southland and my Zephyranthes candida (rain lilies) refuse to flower. I have lived in the Waikato and seen them flowering at Te Kuiti, but here they have plenty of leaves but no flowers. Am I waiting in vain? RUTH HOLDEN. WINTON



Usually pest free and easy to grow, the clumps can be left to multiply into swathes of flowering plants that are great as ground cover under deciduous trees or as a border to a flower bed. The foliage grows to 20-30cm and can be used as a substitute for mondo grass.

Rob, Bob and Muriel Davidson grow zephyranthes at their stunning garden and nursery, Maple Glen, in Wyndham, so I asked for their growing tips for the deep south.

"Rain lilies like a warm, dry spell in summer followed by autumn rains to trigger them to flower well. We get plenty of rain in Southland, but the warm summer can be elusive," Rob replied.

"Try growing them in pots in a tunnel house or plant them in the garden in a warm, north-facing position."

Maple Glen is a 10-hectare private garden that is open to visitors all year round. The nursery sells potted perennials, irises and bulbs by mail order. The catalogue and garden visiting details are at mapleglen.co.nz. Barbara Smith



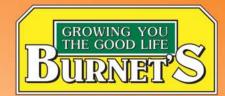
TREE ID Please could you tell me the name of this deciduous tree? The flowers are pale purple and have rather a spicy scent. I have been told the fruits, which are like a small nut, may be poisonous to dogs. JAN BURROWS, TAKAKA

This is Melia azedarach, commonly called the bead tree or china berry. It is

widespread in warmer areas of the country and is often used as a street tree in Auckland. Russell Fransham, our Northland writer, recommends it as a good choice for smaller gardens. "It is a tree that pays its rent every month of the year, always looking handsome, interesting and different at every season. Its moderate size and graceful shape means it doesn't outgrow its welcome on a small property.

"Planted close to the house they provide delicious spring perfume and deep summer shade, then sunshine in late winter when you need it most. And best of all, it brings wood pigeons to the garden all year long."

The bead-like yellow berries hang on the leafless branches in winter and are very attractive to birds. It is these berries that are poisonous to humans and livestock if they are eaten in large quantities. The berries are very bitter and unpleasant to humans and there have been no reports of poisoning in New Zealand. Melia berries are toxic to dogs, but so are many other plants. Ensure pets' safety by not leaving them unattended where they can get access to potentially dangerous plants and watch them to see which plants interest them. Barbara Smith







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KID PARADE



MIA OHLSEN (5)

loves picking and eating broad beans in her Auckland garden.



LIAM PALMER (4)

of Christchurch made a scarecrow to guard the beans.



TUI SIMPSON (7)

of Alexandra dressed her scarecrow in some old pyjamas.



ISOBEL MOORE (11/4)

helps herself to the Christmas peas in mum's Rangiora garden.

GROWING CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

YOU WILL NEED • sundew, pitcher or Venus flytrap plants • glazed ceramic or plastic pots with a drainage hole • a drip tray or saucer • washed sand • sphagnum moss • water



SOAK THE SPHAGNUM MOSS in water until it is sopping wet. Mix a handful of moss with a couple of handfuls of sand.



PUT THE PLANT IN ITS NEW POT. Use the moss and sand mix to fill in around the sides of the pot. Firm in gently.



PUTA LAYER OF WET MOSS over the soil surface and tuck it in around the plant.



PLACE THE POTS on the drip tray and add 1cm of water to the tray.

GROWING TIPS

- · Carnivorous plants naturally grow in full sun in bogs where there are few soil nutrients. A sunny window sill is a good place to keep your plants.
- · Don't use fertiliser. All the food they need comes from the insects they catch.
- Always keep 1cm of water in the drip tray. Never let the plants dry out.
- Repot every second year.
- · Don't worry if the plants die back in cold weather. They are just going dormant for the winter. Wait for new growth to come in spring.



JACK HULSE (2)

of Auckland grew snowpeas taller than he is.

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Events quide

NORTH ISLAND

- February

 Hutt Valley Horticultural Society Begonia and Fuchsia Show. James Coe Centre. Dowse Art Museum. Laings Rd, Lower Hutt. Sat 12-4pm, Sun 10am-4pm. Entry: \$3 adults, children and members free. All welcome to exhibit, ph 04 479 5548 for details. January 31- February 1
- · High Tea and Fashion in the Garden. Bell Block Puketapu Lions fun day out with high tea, fashion and music in the garden. Proceeds to the Taranaki Helicopter Trust. 1.30pm. 34 Lower King Rd, RD2, New Plymouth. Tickets \$35, ph 06 755 0761, glenfern34@vahoo.com, February 1
- Heroic Festival Celebrity Debate. Lynda Hallinan, Tony Murrell and Xanthe White discuss "What makes a good garden - people or plants?' Takapuna Grammar School Hall, 210 Lake Rd, Takapuna. 7.30pm. Limited tickets. Book at heroicgardens.org.nz. February 4
- Pukeiti Explorer Day. Guided walk through rainforest to the Puketewhiti summit. Bring walking shoes, water and lunch. Allow three hours. 10.30am-2pm, 2290 Carrington Rd. New Plymouth. 0800 736 222. pukeiti.org.nz. February 1
- Tupare Waitangi Day Garden Fair and Guided Walk. Take in a guided walk at 8.30am or a house tour from 11am. Entertainment & displays. Bring a picnic. 487 Mangorei Rd, New Plymouth. 0800 736 222. tupare.info. February 6
- Martinborough Fair. Hundreds of stalls around the village square. 8am-4pm. martinboroughfair.org.nz. February 7
- Point Wells Village Fete. Market & craft stalls, plants, music, children's activities, Devonshire teas, sausage sizzle, books, art, produce, vintage car & tractor displays. Point Wells Waterfront Reserve. 10am-3pm.

February 8

 Auckland Chrysanthemum and **Dahlia Society Dahlia Show** Auckland Horticultural Centre, 990 Great North Rd, Western Springs, Auckland. 10am-4.30pm. Entry \$2. Children free. Plenty of parking Contact: Stewart Bowmar ph 09 445 0038. February 14

- Hawera Horticultural Society Summer Flower Show. Open to public 12.30-5pm. Hawera Community Centre, Albion St. Admission \$3. Show entries open to all. Enquiries to Lyn ph 06 278 9182. February 14
- · Heroic Garden Festival. 28 prestigious Auckland gardens open to support Mercy Hospice Auckland and Hospice North Shore. Two-day pass \$50 or individual gate entry. February 14-15
- Food Matters Aotearoa Te Papa. 12 international and national speakers, stimulating workshops. Wellington. foodconference.co.nz. February 14-15
- Wellington Botanic Garden guided walk: trees and their fungal friends. Meet 11am, Founders' Entrance, Glenmore St for a 90minute stroll. Cost: \$4. February 15
- Food Matters Aotearoa Hawkes Bay. Speakers: Havelock North, Conference Centre. 1-5.30pm. Sessions with international speakers. Various locations around Hastings. 8.30-11.30am. foodconference.co.nz. February 16-17
- Food Matters Aotearoa Auckland. Speakers: Gilles-Eric Séralini and Jérôme Douzelet's talk on "Culinary pleasures or hidden poisons?" Dr Vandana Shiva's talk on "Preserving seed integrity and food sovereignty." Rutherford Room, Alexandra Park, Epsom, Auckland. 7.30-10pm. foodconference.co.nz. February 19
- · Green Urban Living Open Day, Havelock North. Visit Janet Luke's urban, sustainable permaculture garden. 1-4pm. See details at greenurbanliving.co.nz. February 21
- Auckland Begonia Circle Annual Begonia Festival and Show. Raffles, trading tables, demonstrations and expert advice. Auckland Botanic Gardens, Hill Rd, Manurewa. Sat 9.30am-4pm, Sun 10am-3pm. Entry \$2. aucklandbegoniacircle.org.nz. February 21-22
- · Otari-Wilton's Bush guided walk the Southern (von Meuller) waterfall. See a part of Otari that few know about and even fewer have seen. This two-hour walk and clamber, in parts off-track, to the hidden waterfall above the southern picnic area is reasonably strenuous. Feet

might get wet, so good boots are recommended. Meet 2pm, Otari Information Centre, Wilton Rd.

Cost: \$3. February 22

- Hollard Gardens 20-minute Garden Workshop. Want to grow your own food but have no time? We'll show you some short, sharp ideas to save time and space - from square-foot gardening to crops in pots. 2-4pm. 1686 Upper Manaia Rd, Kaponga. 0800 736 222. hollardgardens.info. February 22
- Wellington Botanic Garden guided walk - beetles, beaks and branches. Insects and birds, and their relationship with both native and introduced plants. Meet 11am, Founders' Entrance, Glenmore St for moderate 90-minute walk with one uphill section. Cost: \$4. February 23

March

 Hollard Gardens International Children's Day Celebration

Kid's activities, music and games. 10am-3pm. In association with Taranaki Kindergarten. Sponsored by POWERCO. Free entry. 1686 Upper Manaia Rd, Kaponga. 0800 736 222. hollardgardens.info. March 1

SOUTH ISLAND

February
• Edible Micro Gardening Competition. Come and see what you can grow in one square metre with no height restriction. Hosted by the Palmerston & Waihemo A&P Association, Palmerston Showgrounds, 33 Gilligan St, Palmerston, Otago. 8am-4pm. Contact: angelabutt453@gmail.com or ph 027 341 4965. February 7

 St Andrew's Garden Ramble. Hokitika. Open 9am for great plant stalls and other goodies. Official opening and scarecrow auction at

- 9.45am. \$15 ticket includes a wonderful day out visiting eight very different gardens in town and country, booklet with maps, morning tea and two chances of a lucky ticket draw. Contact Jan Drylie for tickets or information. ph 03 755 6119, 0212 955 919 or drylie60@gmail.com. February 7
- Food Matters Aotearoa Christchurch. Speakers: Prof. Gilles-Eric Séralini, Jérôme Douzelet and Emeritus Prof. Don Huber. Canterbury University, Central Lecture Theatre C-1, Arts Rd (off Clyde Rd), Ilam, Christchurch. 7.30-10pm. foodconference.co.nz. February 9
- Outram Flower Show. Market & raffle tables. Entries unlimited, \$2 per exhibitor. Outram Church Hall, Holyhead St (Main St). 2-6pm. Admission \$2, children free. Afternoon tea \$3. Contact Daphne ph 03 486 1608 or Denise ph 03 486 2635. February 13
- Riccarton Horticultural Society Summer Show. Dahlias, cut flowers, floral art, home produce, vegetables, sales tables, raffles. Free admission. Refreshments \$3. St Peter's Church Hall, Church Corner, Upper Riccarton, Christchurch. 12.30-4.30pm. Contact Beverley ph 03 960 3381.
- February 14 • Timaru Horticultural Society

Summer Show. Dahlias, roses, carnations, sweet peas, hydrangeas, container plants, orchids, alpine and rock garden plants & flowers, bonsai, floral art, fruit and vegetables. Best tasting tomato competition: Sun 2.30pm. Public vote on Braggers Corner. Caroline Bay Hall, Timaru. Sat 2-5pm, Sun 11am-4.30pm.

February 14-15

 Lands End Garden Club Flower Show in conjunction with the Southland Dahlia Circle. Te Rau Aroha Marae, Cnr Bradshaw & Henderson Streets, Bluff. Sat 1.30-4.30pm, Sun 11am-4pm. Prize giving 3.30pm. Contact: Elaine ph 03 212 8956, Paddy ph 03 212 8218.

February 14-15

 Gore Harvest Show. Vintage stalls & displays. School & student projects. Open to all. Schedules at Campbells Garden Centre & Mitre 10. Special guest speaker Robert Guyton 7.30pm Fri. Enter the Celebrity Scarecrow Competition. James Cumming Wing, Ardwick St. Gore. Gold coin entry. Show open to the public: Fri 10am-6pm, 10am-3pm. Contact 03 208 8191. February 20-21

Free event listings.

Send your event details (at least 10 weeks ahead) to: Events Guide, NZ Gardener, PO Box 6341, Wellesley Street, Auckland 1141; or email mailbox@nzgardener.co.nz with "Event Listing" in the subject line.

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- · Coatesville country gardens. Open by appointment. Admission charged. Ph Woodbridge 09 415 7525, Mincher 09 415 7469, Twin Lakes 09 415 8762, Pine Lee 09 414 4338, Alafois 09 414 4324, The Garden on the Ridge 09 415 7315.
- Dahlia Haven's 24th Annual Free Open Days Saturdays 31st Jan, 21st Feb, 7th & 21st March 2015. 10.30am to 4.00pm. Also open by prior arrangement every Tues, Wed, Thurs Jan 27th to Mar 26th 11.00am-2.00pm. \$5.00 per head (weather permitting). 235 Wilks Road, Dairy Flat Albany. Ph 09 426 7150.

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Copy received after deadline will appear in the following issue. Send to: Small Acorns, NZ Gardener, PO Box 6341, Wellesley St, Auckland. Attention: M de Winter, smallacorns@nzgardener.co.nz, ph 09 634 9864. (Cheques payable to Fairfax New Zealand Ltd.)

new zealand

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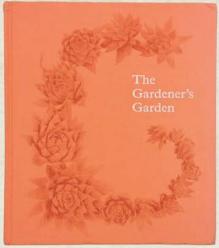


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Bookshelf



THE GARDENER'S GARDEN

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This is certainly a coffee table book on an ambitious scale. Featuring 250 of the world's finest gardens, chosen by a panel of international experts, it's a veritable horticultural smorgasbord, showcasing parks that arc over New York's rooftops alongside centuries-old Renaissance gardens on the shores of Lake Como; and intimate Islamic courtyards set next to the Baroque splendours of Het Loo and Versailles. Key info about each garden is included: the location, the designer and the date of its creation, as well as its size, style and climate. Possibly an unavoidable weakness is that, apart from those key facts, there is fairly limited space given to describing the gardens and their history, which is often covered in just a few paragraphs. Perhaps unsurprisingly the editors are relying on the book's many pictures (there are more than 1200 photos featured across its 500 pages) to tell each garden's story. The book is divided into six sections, based on world regions, and opens with Australia and New Zealand, which includes six Kiwi gardens: Ayrlies in Whitford; Pukeiti outside of New Plymouth; Barewood Garden in Marlborough; Ohinetahi in Lyttelton; Blair Garden in Arrowtown; and Larnach Castle in Dunedin. But Kiwi gardeners seeking inspiration from further ahead will undoubtedly find it here too.





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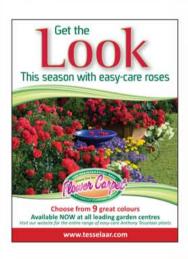
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joe bennett

Upon arriving at the letter H in his ever more compendious compendium, our columnist recalls honeysuckle hedges and a sweetness particular to childhood summers

ith a contented sigh I declare that we have arrived at the eighth month of the *A to Y of Gardening* and its associated letter: aaaahhh H. I have so looked forward to it. (If you are reading this article out loud to the very old or the very young I would be grateful if you'd make it clear that aaaahhh in the preceding sentence does not represent the letter R, because otherwise the old and the young might be distracted from listening to the rest of the article by their efforts to work out what RH stands for. Right hand, they might think, or Roger Harper the West Indian cricketer, or royal halfwit. The possibilities are almost without limit and while they might be entertaining after a fashion, and even educational, they are not the point of the column which is the letter H in the *A to Y of Gardening*.)

I have been looking forward to H because I have known what subject I would address. With other letters I have dithered. With H I shall not. Of course there are boundless Hs I could consider. H is for hortus, the Latin for garden. H is for hebe, hazel and heavenly bamboo. H is for hosta, hollyhock and hybrid toad lily. H is for heartsease, the wild pansy that grew on the hills where I was raised, that was the only form of cardiac medicine known to medieval man. All of these and many

another are Hs worthy of an entry in an A to Y. But they won't get one from me.

(The mind's a perverse thing. Having told the old and young not to think about the meaning of RH, I find that I can think of little else. Right honourable, whispers a voice in my head, and Richard Hutton, who was a mate of mine at primary school and very good at cricket. Our ways parted at the age of 11. I went to the local state school while Richard was packed off to the Catholic school to be indoctrinated. But indoctrination didn't work. Richard became a Buddhist priest and remains one to this day, owning nothing but his orange robe and living in a monastery in the east of England. I know so because I got an email from him a few years ago out of the famously unpredictable blue.

I emailed back delightedly but didn't ask him if he still played cricket because I presumed that Buddhist priests were above such things as batting and bowling.)

But anyway, ladies and gentlemen, H is for honeysuckle. And the name honeysuckle transports me instantaneously and inevitably to the first back garden I ever knew, the garden of number 1 Huggets Lane in the village of Willingdon. Along one side of that garden stood the tallest hedge in the world and twining up through it was a mass of honeysuckle. As I recall, the honeysuckle was perpetually in flower and those flowers were tawny, orange-white and they were shaped like stretched and curving trumpets. They smelt good too, but that didn't interest me. What did was the stuff the plant was named after. I ate the honey.

Pluck a honeysuckle flower, making sure you get the whole thing. At its base is a little green fleshy knob. Grip that knob between the nails of your thumb and middle finger, pinch part way through the flower's flesh, then gently pull. If you get it right you will see that you are pulling on a pistil-stamen-type thing that protrudes from the other end of the flower. Draw it back up through the neck of the trumpet.

The pistil-stamen thing is tipped with a little button. As the button is hauled through the narrow tube of the trumpet it gathers to itself whatever there is in there. And what there is in there is

nectar, nectar that normally goes to the bees. You are robbing the bees.

With a tiny but sensuous final plop, the button of the stamen-pistil thing emerges from the tube encircled by a bead of honeysuckle nectar. Do not delay. Before it drips, lay it upon your young tongue. It is the sweetest substance in the world.

It tastes of childhood.

We left that house at number 1, Huggets Lane, Willingdon, when I was five. I've never been back. It has stayed in my head as Eden. We all need an Eden. H is for honeysuckle. Aaaahhh, H.

(Rush hour, Rolf Harris, reproductive health.) 💠



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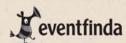
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